



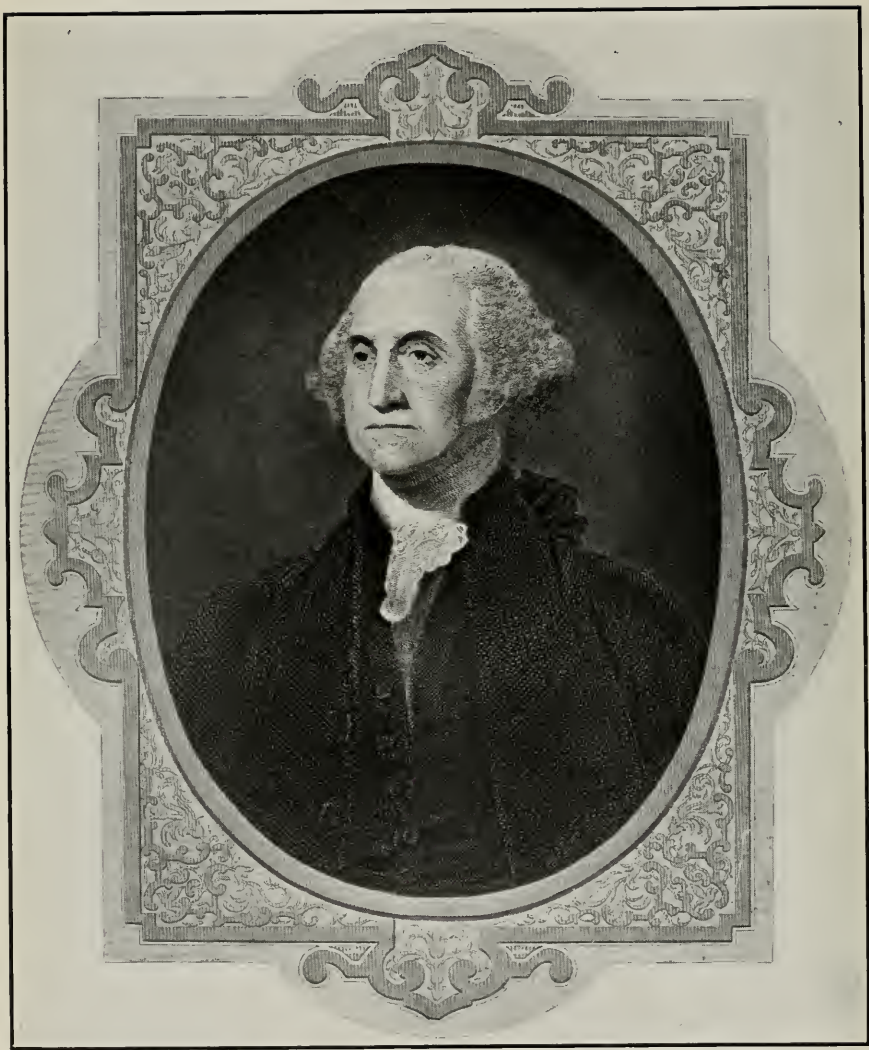












GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1ST PRESIDENT OF THE PATOWMACK COMPANY

(Old Engraving of an Original Painting by Gilbert Stuart)

EARLY CHAPTERS IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
PATOMAC ROUTE TO THE WEST

BY  
MRS. CORRA BACON-FOSTER

WASHINGTON  
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IN THREE PARTS.

I.

THE OHIO COMPANY AND OTHER ADVENTURES.  
1748 to 1774.

II.

THE PATOWMACK COMPANY.  
1784 to 1828.  
From its Unpublished Records.

III.

LIFE OF COLO. CHARLES SIMMS, GENTLEMAN.  
With Selections from his Correspondence.





## ILLUSTRATIONS.

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|                                                                                                                                                     |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Gen. George Washington, First President of the Patowmack Company. (Old Engraving of an Original Painting by Gilbert Stuart.) . . . . .              | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| Gov. Thomas Johnson, Second President of the Patowmack Company. (Family Group by Chas. Peale in the Maryland Historical Society Gallery.) . . . . . | <i>Opposite</i> 18  |
| Great Seal of the Patowmack Company. (Reproduced from Original by the Maurice Joyce Co.) . . . . .                                                  | <i>Preceding</i> 33 |
| First Annual Report of the Patowmack Company. (Original in Possession of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Co.) . . . . .                               | <i>Opposite</i> 74  |
| Little Falls of the Potomac. Entrance to the old Canal at Extreme Right. (Photograph by Mr. B. G. Foster.) . . . . .                                | <i>Opposite</i> 86  |
| Old Stone at the Entrance to the old Canal around Little Falls. (Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon-Foster.) . . . . .                                 | <i>Opposite</i> 90  |
| Letter from Gov. Wm. Paca of Maryland. (Original in Possession of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Co.) . . . . .                                      | <i>Opposite</i> 98  |
| Great Falls of the Potomac in 1802. (Drawn by Beck, Lithograph in the Library of Congress.) . . . . .                                               | <i>Opposite</i> 104 |
| The First Lock at the Great Falls of the Potomac. (Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon-Foster.) . . . . .                                               | <i>Opposite</i> 112 |
| The Second Lock at the Great Falls of the Potomac. (Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon-Foster.) . . . . .                                              | <i>Opposite</i> 120 |
| View of the Potomac River from the Fifth Lock at the Great Falls. (Charcoal Drawing by Miss Milicent Strange.) . . . . .                            | <i>Opposite</i> 130 |
| Gen. John Mason, Last President of the Patowmack Company. (From Portrait in Possession of Mrs. V. C. Dawson.) . . . . .                             | <i>Opposite</i> 140 |

|                                                       |                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Autographs of Stockholders in the Patowmack Company.  |                      |
|                                                       | <i>Opposite</i> 170  |
| Autographs of Stockholders in the Patowmack Company.  |                      |
|                                                       | <i>Opposite</i> 190  |
| Colo. Charles Sinms, Gentleman. (Drawn by Mrs. J. O.  |                      |
| Estabrook from a Minature.) . . . . .                 | <i>Preceding</i> 237 |
| Harpers Ferry, Showing First Arsenal Buildings. (Rare |                      |
| English Engraving of 1800.) . . . . .                 | <i>Opposite</i> 260  |

PART I.  
THE OHIO COMPANY AND OTHER  
ADVENTURES.

1748 to 1774.



[Reprinted from the Records of the Columbia Historical Society.]

## THE OHIO COMPANY, 1748-1874.

By MRS. CORRA BACON-FOSTER.

(Read before the Society, December 14, 1909.)

The story of the first incorporated effort to secure an easy communication between the English settlements on the Atlantic coast and the great country west of the Alleghany Mountains commences about 1740, when Thomas Cresap,<sup>1</sup> the sturdy Yorkshire man, built

<sup>1</sup>Biographical Sketch of the Life of the late Capt. Michael Cresap. Cumberland, Md. Printed for the author (John J. Jacob) by J. W. Buchanan, 1826.

Reprint, Cincinnati, Ohio, with notes and appendix, for Wm. Dodge by Jno. F. Uhlhom, Steam Job Printer, 58 W. 3d St., 1866.

Cin. edition, page 29:

“The Cresap family is large, extensive and respectable; it will not yield the homage of superiority to any family in Virginia or Maryland. . . . Col. Thos. Cresap . . . the head and founder of the Cresap family, emigrated from Yorkshire, England when about fifteen years of age, but the dark shades of obscurity rest upon all the intermediate part of his life from this period until he married a Miss Johnson at the age of about thirty and settled at, or near the place now called Havre de Grace on the Susquehanna River. He was at this time poor, and in providing the necessary articles for housekeeping got involved in debt to the enormous sum of 9£ currency, when it is believed with a view to extricate himself from this debt he took a trip to Virginia, got acquainted with and rented a farm from the Washington family with the intention of removing to that colony. But during his absence his wife was delivered of her first born son, Daniel and on his return refused to go to Virginia. Now however he might be displeased at this he acquiesced; and after having paid his 9£ debt he removed higher up the Susquehanna to or near the

place called Wright's Ferry, opposite the present town of Columbia and obtained a Maryland title for 500 acres of good land. But this unfortunately at that time was disputed territory; and as others set up a claim to this land under a Pennsylvania title a war—called the Conojacular War—took place. Cresap espoused the cause of Lord Baltimore with as much zeal and ardor as the Pennites did that of Mr. Penn, and a battle ensued at a place called Peach Bottom. Cresap's party proved victorious, kept the field and wounded some of the Pennites. But they soon recruited their army and besieged the old fellow in his own home which happened I think to be built of stone. The attack was made in the night, but as the beseiger had neither cannon or battering rams it was found that the fort was impregnable. Finding that it would in all probability be a work of time the beseigers built a fire some distance from the house that they might warm themselves, counsel and deliberate. Cresap, aware of his perilous situation, put out his son Daniel, nine or ten years old to warn his neighbors and friends to his assistance; but the assailants discovered and took him prisoner. . . . The beseigers finding all their efforts unavailing at length . . . set fire to the roof of his house. This had the desired effect, the fort was no longer tenable. As no terms of capitulation were offered the Colonel flew to the door wounding the sentinel who stood there and made good his retreat to his boat, which happened to be so fast as not to be loosened in time and he was surrounded and taken. They tied his hands behind him and were pushing across the river with their herculean prisoner, watched and guarded by a man on each side, but our old Yorkshire hero, seizing a favorable opportunity elbowed one into the river. . . . When the guard arrived at Lancaster with their prisoner they had him handcuffed with iron, which was no sooner done than raising both hands together he gave the smith such a tremendous blow upon his black pate that it brought him to the ground. . . . The prisoner was committed to jail in Philadelphia but for some reason it seems they soon grew tired of their guest and wanted him to go home, which he refused to do until liberated by order of the king.

“During all this time Mrs. Cresap with her children took shelter in an Indian town near Little York. . . . Soon after this Col. Cresap removed to Antietam on a valuable farm called the ‘Long Meadows,’ now in possession of the Spring family. On this farm he built a house of stone over a spring designed as a fort because he was on the frontier and in advance of a white population. He now commenced as an Indian trader and borrowed from Mr. Dulany 500£ to aid him in his business. Having provided a large quantity of furs and skins he shipped them to England. But fortune still frowned. The ship was taken by the French and once more he was compelled to begin the world anew. He gave Mr. Dulany his land, 1400 acres, for the debt and removed to the place now called ‘Old Town,’ but by himself, ‘Skipton’ after the place of his nativity. This place is a few miles above the junction of the north and south

branches of the Potomac, on the north fork and it became his permanent residence, here he acquired an immense landed estate on both sides of the river, in Virginia and Maryland. It was perhaps about this time that he renewed his acquaintance with the Washington family and he entered conjointly into an association with two or three gentlemen of this name, of which I think the General was one, George Mason and many other gentlemen in England and America and formed what was called the 'Ohio Company.' This company made the first English settlement at Pittsburg before the Braddock war and it was through their means and efforts that the first path was traced through that vast chain of mountains. Col. Cresap as one of the company and active agent thereof . . . employed an Indian, Nemacolin, to lay out and mark a road from Cumberland to Pittsburg. . . .

"There can be no doubt that the exertions of this company had a strong tendency to accelerate the exploration and settlement of the western country.

"Col. Cresap's literary attainments were small. His mind was however vigorous, comprehensive and strong, by industry and application he obtained a sufficient knowledge of mathematics to be entrusted with the surveyorship of Prince George County . . . and such also was his decision and energy of mind that he frequently represented his county in the legislature. Benevolent and hospitable, Indians called him 'Big Spoon.' He was not large, but of great muscular strength. He lived to reach 105 years.

"At the age of seventy he went to London. While there he was commissioned by Lord Baltimore to run the western line of Maryland with a view to ascertain which of the two branches of the Potomac was the largest and which was in reality the fountain head or first source of that river.

"The original autograph map was made by Col. Cresap in the neat style of a good county surveyor and sent by him to Gov. Sharpe. It came to Mr. Gilmer's possession with many other of the Ridout papers and is attested by Horatio Ridout whose father was Sharpe's secretary. This was the first map ever made to show the course and fountains of the north and south branches of the Potomac River in regard to which there has been so much controversy between Maryland and Virginia."—Note p. 39, Cin. ed.

(Map, made prior to 1754 given in Md. Archives, Vol. 6, p. 72.)

"When eighty he married a second time. When one-hundred he made a land and sea journey to Nova Scotia. His son Michael was a celebrated character on the frontier for many years, was ignorantly accused of the murder of Chief Logan's family, died in the Revolutionary service."—*Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 10, p. 146, with sketch of house.



him a fortified home on a beautiful bluff overlooking the upper Potomac and near a deserted old village of the Shawnees.<sup>2</sup>

To-day no one knows what impulse drove this man beyond the last outpost of civilization for his third venture in life. Did the wife who had refused to go to Virginia, cheerfully consent to go with her young family into the wilderness? The home made secure against attack and the crop of wheat and Indian corn safely stored, with an Indian for guide and companion, Cresap strode forth bound for the west to trade and prospect. His repeated expeditions—we infer they were successful—led him farther and farther into and beyond the mountain ranges to the great western country, even beyond the “Beautiful River” where no white man had then dared fix his abode.

Thomas Cresap seems to have settled on the west bank of the Susquehanna some time about 1730 under a grant from Lord Baltimore; being a man of intelligence and strength of character he was intrusted with the supervision of that neighborhood, surveying land for settlers, collecting taxes and quit rents. The Penns were also claiming that portion of the country and settlers on the east side of the river gave the Marylanders much trouble. These culminated in open warfare when in 1736 a settlement of Palatines fancied they were properly in Pennsylvania and refused to pay Maryland taxes. Cresap was several times assaulted in his own house and finally was burnt out and arrested and kept in irons for nearly two years. This naturally embittered him very much, his resentment against Pennsylvania never smouldered and when opportunity offered he never hesitated to strike. The friendship of all Indians for him at that period of his career is shown by the fact that Shawnees gave his wife and children shelter and protection during his imprisonment.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of Capt. Chas. Lewis, a soldier in Braddock’s army, Dec. 2, 1755. While foraging—“We arrived about two o’clock at a plantation of one Cresap’s, most delightfully situated on land that gave me great pleasure, ’twas a piece of low ground entirely surrounded by the mountains, the prospect remantick, high rocks on the sides of the mountains some hundred feet perpendicular to the river Potomack. Here we lodged this night in a comfortable house.”—Wisconsin Hist. Soc., Draper MSS.

\*18 U. W., Va. Hist. Mag., Vol. 4, p. 109.

From Indians and the occasional hunters he met, he learned that the French were preparing to take possession of all that fertile land.<sup>3</sup> Imbued with the true Briton's hatred of the papist Frenchman he pondered seriously upon the situation as he returned to the east laden with his valuable pelts. He then probably concluded that to locate English colonies with strong military protection would check invasion and repel attacks of hostile Indians; such settlements would be in Virginia territory and if he had his will not open to Pennsylvanians.<sup>4</sup> He had sometimes hunted with George Croghan,<sup>5</sup> who was in the employ of Philadelphia merchants and also in the confidence of Sir William Johnson, of the Mohawk Valley.<sup>6</sup> Croghan, it is true, was always most amiable with Virginians, but he was Irish and under the genial influence of Cresap's fine rum he doubtless told much of his patrons' plans that he had been wise to reserve.<sup>7</sup>

The hatred of Cresap for the Pennsylvanians we may regard as the first political incident in our story; he regarded them as the enemies of himself and Maryland. As Maryland had no western territory he would naturally go to Virginia with his projects. So loading a stout boat with his accumulation of fine furs and wrapping his gentleman's costume in waterproof cover he floated with the current of the Potomac to the civilization in tide-water settlements, skilfully avoiding rocks and shoals by day, by night tied up out of reach of possible marauders. At Great Falls was the only

<sup>3</sup> R. G. Thwaites, "France in America." W. M. Sloane, "French War and Revolution," p. 267. Facsimile of the Celeron plate, "The Olden Time," Craig, Vol. 1, p. 288.

<sup>4</sup> Thwaites, "France in America," p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> W. M. Darlington, "Christopher Gist's Journals," p. 176.

<sup>6</sup> F. W. Halsey, "The Old New York Frontier," p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Writings of Benjamin Franklin, Swyth, Vol. 4, p. 461, Vol. 5, p. 46.

portage, but there he found rest and refreshment at the warehouse of Ludwell Lee in the town of "Philae." Thence to the York the sailing would be mere pastime—with fair winds.

Many of the prominent men of the colony were at the time in the Assembly in session at Williamsburg. The intelligent Cresap had no difficulty in interesting them in his view of the political and economic situation over the mountains. Indeed some such scheme must already have suggested itself as a result of the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744,<sup>8</sup> when Thos. Lee for Virginia paid to the Indians £200 in gold and £300 in goods for a deed recognizing the king's right to all the "lands that are or shall be by His Majesty's appointment in the colony of Virginia." Lord Baltimore at the same time paid £300 in goods for a release of all claim to western Maryland "as far as two miles . . . above where Thos. Cresap has a hunting or trading cabin." A strong company was at once formed (1748) for trading with the Indians and establishing settlements in the western country. This was the organization of the "Ohio Company," the most powerful of all pre-Revolutionary trade corporations and the first incorporated effort to reach the great west. Its lineal successors have been: the Potomac Company, 1784, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, 1826, the National Road, the first national inland improvement, 1806. We might include the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, completed to St. Louis in 1857.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Penna. Col. Records, Vol. 4, pp. 698-737.

<sup>9</sup> Bancroft, Vol. 3, p. 29, p. 50.—"While Penna. neglected its western frontier the Ohio Co. of Va. profiting by the intelligence of Indian hunters who had followed every stream to its head spring and crossed every gap in the mountain ranges discovered the path by Will's Creek to the Ohio. Their stores in 1750 were carried no farther than that creek." W. H. Lowdermilk, Cumberland, Md., p. 26. Darlington, Gist's

The company was organized in 1748 and secured from the King in May, 1749, a charter and grant to a half million acres of land on these terms—200,000 acres to be at once located on the north of the Ohio River with the provision that if the company did not erect a fort on the land and maintain a sufficient garrison therein and locate at their own expense a hundred families therein in seven years the grants would be void, but if these terms were accomplished they were to receive the further grant of 300,000 acres of land. On a second petition the company secured the entire grant with very little restriction as to location.

Thos. Lee, at the time president of His Majesty's Council in Virginia, held two of the twenty shares and was president of the company, the John Hanbury Co., of London, held two shares and were the London agents, Geo. Mason became and always remained the treasurer, John Mercer, the most distinguished lawyer in the colonies, was chosen secretary and legal adviser, Thomas Cresap became the manager in the field, Lawrence and Augustine Washington held shares, three shares were held in Maryland. Upon his arrival Governor Dinwiddie promptly secured shares and was a valuable member.<sup>10</sup> Upon a general meeting at Stafford Court House in 1749 they agreed with H. Parker for the carriage of all their goods from the Falls of the Potomac to their general factory on the Ohio and authorized Colonel Cresap to have a road opened to these places.<sup>11</sup>

Journals, p. 224, etc. "The papers of the Ohio Company are in the possession of Mr. Robt. Clarke of Cleveland, Ohio."—Fernow.

<sup>10</sup> Dinwiddie Papers, Vol. 1, p. 17, in reply to a letter from Cresap, "I have the success and prosperity of the Ohio Co. much at heart."

<sup>11</sup> Toner, "Washington's Journal," 1747-8, p. 65, "Mem, to survey the lands at the mouth of Little Cacapehon and the mouth of 15 mile Ck. for the gentlemen of the Ohio Co." See note, p. 64.

These terms required energetic action. By the advice of Cresap, Christopher Gist,<sup>12</sup> a man of good family connections, educated, experienced in dealing with Indians, familiar with the Ohio country, living by preference on the frontier, was engaged to select the enormous tract of land by actual observation, to go as far down the river as the "Falls" (Louisville) and to secure the friendship of the chiefs of the tribes he encountered. In November, 1749, he set out on this hazardous mission, leaving Will's Creek (Cumberland) well equipped for the journey. He critically examined the country to the north of the great river as far as the Miamis, cultivated the acquaintance of the numerous chiefs by making them many presents of trinkets from the "Great White Father," took copious notes by the way and made plots of many good locations and in three months returned weary and foot-sore to the company's station at Will's Creek. His report was eminently satisfactory. The company at once built a storehouse at Will's Creek and ordered £4,000 worth of trading goods from Hanbury & Co., in London. Cresap with the assistance of the Indian Nemacolin surveyed and blazed a path from Will's Creek to the point on the Monongahela afterwards known as Fort Red Stone, the home of Christopher Gist.<sup>13</sup> This was the original survey of the road over the mountains followed by Washington in 1754, Braddock in 1755 and the engineers of the "National Pike" in 1807 and the railroad engineers in our own day.

But it was necessary to have the king's grant of land recognized by the savages in possession, hence in 1752

<sup>12</sup> Darlington, "Gist's Journals," p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Lowdermilk, "Cumberland," p. 29. He built there the first house west of the mountains to have a nailed-on roof. Eleven families settled about him.



Gist, as agent of the company, with three commissioners from Virginia, met the Half King and other chiefs at Logstown on the Ohio and made a treaty by which was secured to white settlers unmolested possession of lands southeast of the Ohio.<sup>14</sup> George Croghan was a subscribing witness. Gist was then instructed to lay off a town at Chartier's Creek, just below the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers; £400 was allowed for building the protecting fortification; he with several families settled there. A third depot of supplies had been built at Red Stone and the temporary store at Will's Creek replaced by one more commodious and capable of defence, a town called Charlottesville was also there laid out and trade in town lots was quite active for a time.<sup>15</sup>

The business prospered; no shares of the stock could be bought. The favored holders were jubilant. In transportation of stores the Potomac and Monongahela rivers were utilized.

But clouds lowered on the horizon. The Pennsylvania and New York traders were not pleased with the Virginia monopoly, claiming the same privileges under the terms of the Lancaster treaty of 1744. And the French were not caught napping; they soon followed up the planting of the Celeron lead plates with armed invasion.

In 1752 the Virginia Assembly passed an act for encouraging western settlement by relieving the settlers from all taxation. In 1754 during the exodus to the

<sup>14</sup> Darlington, "Mercer's Instructions to Gist in Reference to Terms of Treaty," pp. 231-6.

<sup>15</sup> Lowdermilk, "Cumberland," pp. 30-1. Hulbert, "Historie Highways," Vol. 4, opposite p. 26. Plan of Fort Cumberland and vicinity dated Feb., 1755, shows the two store houses of the Ohio Co., one a long two-story building, the other much smaller, like a block house, both across the Potomac River from the fort and consequently in Virginia territory.

protection of the east another act was passed, with much opposition, for taking £10,000 from the revenues for military service on the frontier. In 1766 an act was passed with an appropriation of £200 for the improvement of Braddock's road. All these acts were in the interest of the Ohio Company and secured by the influence of the stockholders.<sup>16</sup>

From the first days of the settlement the Virginians of the tide water country had used their many water ways as highways between their widely separated plantations, and much of the early legislation was directed to the improvement of navigation on these streams;<sup>17</sup> hence it was but natural that they should seek a water transportation to the country beyond the mountains as soon as trade with the Indians and frontiersmen became of value. The Ohio Company had used the Potomac from 1749.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of the beaver as a factor in the commercial and political history of the English and French colonization has been recognized by all historians. The barter for these and other valuable pelts led the adventurous traders farther and farther beyond the defiles of the mountain boundaries of the English colonies; returning they gave glowing descriptions of the beauty and fertility of the country—of the noble streams flowing to the southwest and to the great lakes. Early in the eighteenth century New York and Philadelphia

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Dobbs, John Hanbury, Samuel Smith, Jas. Wardrop, Capel Hanbury, Robt. Dinwiddie, Esqr., Exec. of Thos. Lee, late President and Governor of Va.—2 shares. John Tayloe, Esq., Prestly Thornton, Esq., Exrs. of Law. Washington, Augustine Washington, Richard Lee, Nath. Chapman, Jacob Giles, Thos. Cresap, John Mercer, James Scott, Robert Carter, George Mason.

<sup>17</sup> Hening's Statutes of Va., Vols. 5-6.

<sup>18</sup> Report of Gen. J. F. Mercer from Com. on roads, \*90, 19th Congress, 1st session, House Document.

merchants were sending out wily traders well equipped with firearms as well as with firewater and trinkets adapted to captivate the savage taste, such as beads, bits of looking glass and bright ribbons. The merchants reaped a rich harvest from the returns. For convenience these traders often located their families far out on the frontier.<sup>19</sup> Of these hardy adventurers Christopher Gist, George Croghan, Thos. Cresap and his son Michael became famous in the trying years after the French invasion. A few sturdy Palatines pushed on through the valleys of Pennsylvania to western Maryland and the beautiful valley of Virginia along the Shenandoah; they were followed in a few years by the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, who went into and beyond the mountains.<sup>20</sup>

Meantime, about 1747, two young gentlemen, George Washington and George William Fairfax, were amusing themselves in surveying fields and outlying lots about Mt. Vernon and Belvoir on the lower Potomac; an occasional companion was a slim lad of about the same age with a pleasant, refined countenance lighted by a pair of wonderful dark eyes; he cared little for horses and athletic sports, but was reading law in Mr. Bordley's office at Annapolis; this stripling was Thomas Johnson, Maryland's greatest son.<sup>21</sup> Thus early commenced the lifelong friendship between these men. The cynical Lord Fairfax, who was at the time visiting his cousin, became interested in the surveying and in the young man who arrived at such accurate results, and who he was told had his own fortune to seek. He chose the shy, awkward and overgrown lad for his companion on many excursions, to the amuse-

<sup>19</sup> All histories of the period.

<sup>20</sup> Esten Cooke, "Virginia," Chap. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Tradition in the Johnson family.



ment of a bright lady of the family, who remarked that the two must be congenial company, "as the Lord never spoke at all and George only when addressed."<sup>22</sup>

When Lord Fairfax sent out Mr. Geen, an experienced surveyor, to explore and locate his northern lines, he had evidently heard of the location of the western boundary of Maryland by Captain Thomas Cresap,<sup>23</sup> he employed the two young gentlemen to accompany him as assistants, paying each the goodly sum of a daily doubloon. Of the two months thus employed we have an interesting account in Washington's diary in which he jotted down his close observation of soil, timber and streams; he was for several days the guest of Captain Cresap and had his first experience of a Potomac freshet.<sup>24</sup> The surveyor's report of his assistants' work evidently pleased the Lord for he soon appointed Washington surveyor-in-chief with headquarters at his hunting lodge, Greenway Court, in the Shenandoah Valley.

In the three years thus occupied Washington had constant opportunity to become very familiar with the upper Potomac in its various stages of drouth and high water. He must have often visited the depot of the Ohio Company at Will's Creek and the two-storied, stockaded home of Thomas Cresap. Upon the receipt of his military appointment in 1751<sup>25</sup> he returned to

<sup>22</sup> See Dr. Weir Mitchell's "Autobiography of George Washington in His Youth," p. 72: "George only when spoken to and the Lord once a week."

<sup>23</sup> Cresap probably made the survey of the headwaters of the Potomac about 1745. His original map is among the Gilmor Papers in the Maryland Hist. Soc. collection. Legend—"First map ever made to show the course and fountains of the north and south branches of the Potomac River." Signed by Mr. Horatio Ridout, the son of Gov. Sharpe's secretary.

<sup>24</sup> Toner's "Journal of Washington," 1747-8, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Dinwiddie Papers, Vol. 1, pp. 49-59.

the lower country and found the engrossing topic of the day to be "The Ohio Company and its golden future."

In 1753 the tidings of the French invasion was brought in by returning hunters. Governor Dinwiddie, a holder of Ohio Company stock, promptly sent the best envoy at hand, also interested, to investigate and to warn.<sup>26</sup> The heroic winter journey made by Washington and Gist to the French camp on the Alleghany is too well known to here recite.<sup>27</sup> The French did not heed the warning and thereby lost a continent. A detachment was sent to fortify the Forks of the Ohio and to defend the company's stores at Chartier's Creek, but were too late.<sup>28</sup> When Washington was sent to assist Captain Trent he opened the path blazed by Cresap and Nemacolin into a fair wagon road; it had hitherto been merely a trail for moccasined feet and pack horses. General Braddock made of it a military road in 1755. Doubtless the colonists' jealousy of the success of the Ohio Company was one cause of their lukewarm support of his campaign. During the Washington and Braddock campaigns heavily laden boats were constantly passing up and down the Potomac. The militant Governor Sharpe of Maryland, in company with Braddock's commissary-general, made a careful inspection of the river from Cumberland to Great Falls and reported that while artillery could not be carried by that route all other supplies might.<sup>29</sup>

During the terrible years of conflict on the frontier

<sup>26</sup> The same, Vol. 1, pp. 49-59.

<sup>27</sup> "Washington's Journal," Ford, Vol. 1, p. 11. "Gist's Journals," Darlington, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Washington to Col. Bouquet, Ford, Vol. 2, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Jan. 28, 1755. "These gentlemen stepped into a small boat at Fort Cumberland and descended the Potomac to Alexandria." Lowdermilk, p. 103. Also Sharpe's letter in Md. Archives, Vol. 6, p. 186.

little thought was given to trade, transportation or settlement. The Ohio Company's seven years of grace lapsed. The last meetings of the company of which we have any record were called through the Virginia and Maryland *Gazettes* in 1778 and 1779 by George Mason, treasurer, for "business of the utmost importance."<sup>30</sup>

The great political influence of the Ohio Company had been shown by the selection of the Potomac route for General Braddock's advance on Fort Du Quesne—this influence had been exerted in London and was most displeasing to the Philadelphians, who contended they had better roads and greater facilities for transporting and provisioning troops in Pennsylvania.<sup>31</sup>

General Forbes in 1758, after some delay, selected a Pennsylvania route for his advance and made a road directly over the mountains, much to the disgust of the Virginians and Marylanders. That was the era of provincial distrust and jealousy. Here is one of the Virginia Colonel Washington's letters on the selection of the route addressed to Colonel Bouquet in command of the advance:<sup>32</sup>

"CAMP NEAR FORT CUMBERLAND, 2d. August. 1758.

"*Sir*;—The matters of which we spoke relative to the roads, have since our parting, been the subject of my closest reflection, and so far am I from altering my opinion, that the more time and attention I bestow, the more I am confirmed in it, and the reasons for taking Braddock's road appear in a stronger point of view. To enumerate the whole of these reasons would be tedious, and to you who have become so much master of the subject, unnecessary. I shall therefore, briefly mention a few only which I think so obvious in themselves, that they must effectually remove objections.

<sup>30</sup> *Va. Gazette*, May 1, 1778. *Maryland Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1779.

<sup>31</sup> Lowdermilk, p. 238, and many other authorities.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Lowdermilk, p. 238. Ford, Vol. 2, p. 62.

“Several years ago the Virginians and Pennsylvanians commenced a trade with the Indians settled on the Ohio, and to obviate the many inconveniences of a bad road, they, after reiterated and ineffectual efforts to discover where a good one might be made employed for the purpose several of the most intelligent Indians who in course of many years hunting had acquired a perfect knowledge of these mountains. The Indians having taken the greatest pains to gain the rewards offered for this discovery, declared that the path leading from Will’s Creek was infinitely preferable to any that could be made at any other place. Time and experience so clearly demonstrated this truth that the Pennsylvania traders commonly carried out their goods by Will’s Creek. Therefore the Ohio Company in 1753 at considerable expense opened the road. In 1754 the troops whom I had the honor to command greatly repaired it, as far as Gist’s plantation; and in 1755 it was widened and completed by Gen. Braddock to within six miles of Fort Du Quesne. A road that has so long been opened, and so well and so often repaired must be much firmer and better than a new one, allowing the ground to be equally good.”

The distance by the way of Braddock’s road from Will’s Creek to Fort Du Quesne was 115 miles, comparatively level, from Raystown in Pennsylvania through the trackless forest and over mountain ranges was 100 miles, but the new road was cut and the advance made on that line.

So there were then *two* routes to the Ohio which after the pacification of the Indians in 1768 were well worn by westward bound parties of homeseekers.

#### THE FREDERICK TOWN ADVENTURERS.

Projects for clearing the channels in the Potomac Riven began to be agitated in the sixties. Probably the Johnson brothers, at Frederick, were the first to suggest organizing a company to improve the naviga-

tion. They had early settled in that rich valley, had prospered, were progressive and public-spirited citizens. Thomas Johnson was doubtless interested with them in many enterprises and joined them in the county in 1779.

Studying the noble river that sweeps in graceful curves past the valley it was not strange that they should become impatient of the heavy toll to be paid on the wagon transportation to Baltimore of the products of their farms and furnaces, and seek another outlet, so Thomas Johnson appears to have attempted to organize a company to raise the means for improving the navigation of the Potomac. Our only knowledge of it is from the following letter by Washington, which on account of its importance we will quote in full:<sup>33</sup>

“July 20, 1770.

“*Sir*;—I was honored with your favor of the 18th of June about the last of that month, and read it with all the attention I was capable of; from that time till now I have not been able to enquire into the sentiments of any of the gentlemen of this side in respect to the scheme of opening the inland navigation of Potowmack by private subscription, in the manner you have proposed—and therefore any opinion which I may now offer on this head will be considered I hope as the result of my own private thinking, not of the public.

“That no person concerned in this event wishes to see an undertaking of the sort go forward with more sincerity and ardor than I do, I can truly assure you; and I will at all times give any assistance in my power to promote the design, but I leave you to judge from the trial which before this you have undoubtedly made, how few there are, (not immediately bene-

<sup>33</sup> This letter was among the Potomac Co. papers; it was loaned to Mr. Andrew Stewart for his fine report in 1826, “Chesapeake and Ohio Canal,” House Doc., 228, 1st Session, 19th Congress. Its present location is not known; it is not given by Ford or Sparks.





*Thos. Johnson*

Gov. Thos. Johnson, 2d President of PATOWMACK COMPANY.  
(Family Group by Clas. Peale in the Maryland Historical Society Gallery)



fited by it) that will contribute any thing worth while to the work; and how many small sums are required to raise a large one. Upon your plan of raising money it appears to me there will be found but two kinds of people who will subscribe much towards it. Those who are actuated by motives of public spirit, and those again who from their proximity to the navigation will reap the salutatory effects of, clearing the river. The number of the latter you must be a competent judge of; those of the former, is more difficult to ascertain; for which reason, I own to you, that I am not without my doubts of your scheme falling through, however sanguine your first hopes may be from the rapidity of subscribers, for it is to be supposed that your subscription papers will probably be opened among those whose interests *must* naturally incline them to wish well to the undertaking, and consequently will aid it; but when you come to shift the scene a little, and apply to them who are unconnected with the river, and the advantage of its navigation how slowly will you advance.

“This, sir, is my sentiment generally, upon your plan of obtaining subscriptions for extending the navigation of the Potowmack, whereas I conceive, that if the subscriptions were vested by the two legislatures, with a kind of property in the navigation under certain restrictions and limitations and to be re-imbursed their first advances with a high interest thereon, by a certain easy toll on all craft proportionate to their respective burthens, in the manner I am told works of this sort are effected in the inland parts of England, or upon the plan of turnpike roads; you would add thereby a third class of men, to the two I have mentioned, and gain considerable strength by it. I mean the monied gentry, who tempted by luerative views would advance largely on account of the high interest.

“This I am inclined to think, is the only method by which this desirable work will ever be accomplished in the manner it ought to be, for as to its becoming an object of public expense, I never expect to see it. Our interests (in Virginia at least) are too much divided—our views too confined, if our finances were better, to suffer that, which appears to redound



to the advantage of a part of the community only, to become a tax on the whole, though in the instance before us, there is the strongest speculative proof in the world to me of the immense advantages which Virginia and Maryland might derive, (and at a very small comparative expense) by making the Potowmack the channel of commerce between Great Britain and that immense territory. a tract of country which is unfolding to our view, the advantages of which are too great and too obvious, I should think to become the subject of serious debate, but which through ill-timed parsimony and supineness may be wrested from us and conducted through other channels, such as the Susquehanna, (which I have seen recommended by some writers)—the Lakes, &c. How difficult it will be to divert it afterwards time only can show.

“Thus far, sir, I have taken the liberty of communicating my sentiments on the different modes of establishing a fund, but if from the efforts you have already made on the north side of the Potowmack it should be found that my views are rather imaginary than real, (as I heartily wish they may prove) I have no doubt but the same spirit may be stirred up on the south side, if gentlemen of influence in the counties of Hampshire, Frederick, Loudoun and Fairfax will heartily engage in it and receive all occasional sums, received from those who may wish to see a work of this sort undertaken, although they expect no benefit themselves from it.

“As to the manner in which you propose to execute the work in order to avoid the inconvenience which you seem to apprehend from locks, I profess myself to be a very incompetent judge of it. It is a general received opinion I know that by reducing one fall you too frequently create many, but how far this inconvenience is to be avoided by the method you speak of, those who have examined the rifts—the depth of water above, &c. must be infinitely the best qualified to determine. But I am inclined to think that, if you were to exhibit your scheme to the public upon a more extensive plan than the one now printed, it would meet with a more general approbation, for so long as it is considered a partial scheme, so long will it be partially attended to—whereas—if it was recom-

mended to the public notice upon a more enlarged plan, and as a means of becoming the channel of commerce of the extensive and valuable trade of a rising empire;—and the operations to begin at the lower landings, (also the Great Falls), and to extend upwards to as high as Fort Cumberland, or as far as the expenditure of the money would carry them, from whence the portage to the waters of the Ohio must commence, I think many would be induced to contribute their mite, that otherwise will not. It may be said the expense of doing this will be considerably augmented. I readily grant it, but I believe that the subscriptions will increase in proportion; at any rate I think that there will be at least an equal sum raised by this means, and that the end of your plan will be as effectually answered by it.”

Johnson's scheme is probably the one referred to by Scharf<sup>34</sup> where he gives the following gentlemen as managers: Colonel George Mason, Jacob Hite, James Hamilton, John Hough, John Patterson and Abraham Hite, of Virginia; Rev. Thos. Bacon, Dr. David Ross, Christopher Loundes, Thos. Cresap, Benj. Chambers, Jonathan Hagar, Thos. Prather, John Carey, Casper Schaaf, Robt. Peter and Evan Shelby, of Maryland; Colonel George Mercer and Col. Thos. Prather were elected treasurers.

#### VANDALIA COMPANY.

Others outside of Maryland and Virginia were observant of the natural restrictions upon western trade. Robert Morris, of Philadelphia, the greatest of all American promoters, published in 1764 a scheme for utilizing the Schuylkill and Susquehanna rivers to reach the upper Alleghany.<sup>35</sup> Sir William Johnson, of

<sup>34</sup> Scharf, “History of Maryland,” Vol. 2, p. 258. The date, 1762, is evidently an error.

<sup>35</sup> Morris, “An Historical Account of Rise and Progress and Present State of Canal Navigation in Pennsylvania,” 1795.

New York, Governor Richard Franklin, of Pennsylvania, Samuel Wharton, merchant, with George Croghan, hunter and trader, were planning colonization on a gigantic scale.<sup>36</sup> The Indian tribes north of the Ohio who had plundered Wharton's stores and murdered some of his traders, were summoned to a council at Fort Stanwix on the Mohawk in 1768. After many days of feasting and drinking the savages were cajoled into signing away an enormous quantity of western land to the white men.<sup>37</sup>

Wharton then went to London and associated with himself Benjamin Franklin, Thos. Walpole, a man of political influence and wealth, our old acquaintance, John Hanbury, Governor Thos. Pownall and others in an effort to secure a grant of land from the crown for a new colony beyond the mountains. After many vexatious delays they were about to succeed in establishing the buffer province of Vandalia when the exposé of Franklin's connection with the Hutchinson letters ruined their schemes.

Immediately after the close of hostilities on the frontier the Ohio Company had sent George Mercer, son of the secretary, to London to renew the old charter. He remained there six years, accomplishing nothing; he finally accepted for the company an offer to combine with the Walpole Company and returned to America about 1774. The Ohio Company refused to confirm his action. In 1770 Mercer had the assistance of Thos. Cresap, who went from Maryland for the purpose.

In 1754 Virginia had made a grant of 200,000 acres on the Kanawha for the benefit of her men engaged in the French and Indian War. There was much difficulty in locating these military warrants. Washing-

<sup>36</sup> See Benj. Franklin's letters to his son, in Smyth, Vols. 4-5-6.

<sup>37</sup> Halsey, "Old New York Frontier," p. 99.

ton became the agent of the claimants and served his clients faithfully. In 1770 he made a personal inspection of the lands on the Ohio and Kanawha. On the way homeward he visited Colonel Cresap, who had recently returned from London with the latest information of the new province on the Ohio.<sup>38</sup> He at once wrote several eloquent letters to Governors Botecourt and Dunmore, pleading for justice for the defenders of Virginia's frontiers.<sup>39</sup> Mercer had secured recognition of the soldiers' rights from the Walpole Company, but Washington was evidently ignorant of it.<sup>40</sup>

While all this paper disputation was going on settlers were pouring into the rich valleys beyond the mountains, selecting homesteads and paying scant attention to paper titles, fearing only the wily foe who lurked in the surrounding thickets.<sup>41</sup>

For many years Washington was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. Early in 1772 he secured an act for opening the Potomac navigation.<sup>42</sup> Writing to Dr. Boucher from Mt. Vernon, May 4, 1772, he referred to this act:

“ . . . An act has passed this session empowering Trustees (to be chosen by ye Subscribers to the Scheme) to raise money by way of Subscriptions & Lottery, for the purpose of opening & extending the Navigation of Potowmack from the Tide water, to Fort Cumberland; & for perpetuating the Tolls arising from vessels to the Adventurers in the Scheme—but ye execution of it must necessarily be suspended till something similar passes into a Law in your Province.”

<sup>38</sup> Ford, Vol. 2, Diary, Oct. 8, 1770.

<sup>39</sup> Ford, Vol. 2, p. 272.

<sup>40</sup> Mercer secured from the Walpole Co. for the Ohio Co. 2/72 of the new grant, for himself 1/72. This last possibly had something to do with the company's repudiation of the contract.

<sup>41</sup> Doddridge, Joseph, “Notes on Settlement in Va.,” pp. 99-112.

<sup>42</sup> Hening, Va. Statutes, Vol. 8, p. 573. Ford, Vol. 2, p. 348.

Thomas Johnson exerted himself to secure a like act from the Maryland assembly but failed on account of the opposition of Baltimore merchants. This is alluded to in Washington's letter to Jefferson from Mt. Vernon, March 29, 1784.

“ . . . More than ten years ago I secured the passage of an act for the opening of Potowmack navigation. . . . The local interest of that place (Baltimore) joined to the short-sighted policies or contracted views of another part of the Assembly gave Mr. Thos. Johnson, who was a warm Promoter of the Scheme on the north side of the Potowmack a great deal of trouble.”

#### THE BALLENDINE SCHEME.

John Ballendine, gentleman, of Fairfax County, Virginia, for many years engaged in iron works at Colchester<sup>43</sup> and at the Falls of the James River, familiar with the Potomac, took notice of the drift of public interest and concocted a most brilliant plan for achieving fame—and a fortune. Taking advantage of a meeting of the governors of the two colonies, Lord Fairfax and a number of prominent gentlemen in Prince William County,<sup>44</sup> he secured from them on the 8th of May, 1772, a testimonial of their confidence in his integrity and ability with a subscription to a fund to enable him to go to Great Britain to examine canals, locks, etc. there in operation with a view to applying the knowledge thus obtained to the improvement of the navigation of the Potomac and James rivers. In August he inspected the Potomac and from the head of the navigable waters of the North Branch he followed

<sup>43</sup> Ford, Vol. 2, p. 142. Washington Diary, Jan 8, 1760: “Directed an Indictment to be formed by Mr. Johnston against John Ballendine for a fraud in some Iron he sold me.” Sept. 24, 1768: “Colo Henry Lee & Lady & Miss Ballendine came to dinner & stayd all night.”

<sup>44</sup> Ford, Vol. 2. Washington in letter to Boucher refers to Gov. Eden's visit to Va., May 23, 1772.



the Nemacolin Path to the Monongahela in "the proposed Ohio Province." He announced that the distance between the two rivers was not more than ten or eleven miles!<sup>45</sup>

He reached London with his credentials in the height of the Walpole Company excitement and was doubtless well received.<sup>46</sup> Franklin had opened the way for Ballendine in his famous reply to the Lords Commissioners of Trade in which he stated:

"The country is well watered by several navigable rivers communicating with each other and by which and a short land carriage of only forty miles the produce of the lands of the Ohio can even now be sent cheaper to the seaport town of Alexandria on the river Potomac than any kind of merchandise is at present sent from Northampton to London."<sup>47</sup>

Soon Ballendine (1773) had in circulation his "Proposals for opening the navigation of the Rivers James and Potomac" and was seeking subscribers. It was a formidable document by which the subscriber was insured against all possible loss, the installments of the sums subscribed were to be paid only on the certifications of the two governors that certain portions of the work had been completed in a satisfactory manner. In a printed advertisement widely circulated he stated:

"It is proposed by Mr. Ballendine that the locks intended to be erected in the Rivers James and Potomac shall always have four feet of water in them, as that is the general depth of those rivers, except in the spring and fall (which are the great periods of exportation and importation from and into Mary-

<sup>45</sup> "A connected view of the whole internal navigation of the U. S.," published by the author, Phila., 1830 (written 1825), in which the Ballendine English contracts were copied. I have been so far unable to locate the original authority.

<sup>46</sup> Spark's "Washington," Vol. 2, appendix 7, p. 483.

<sup>47</sup> Same as above.

land and Virginia) when these rivers usually have from six to eight feet water in them. Mr. Ballendine is thoroughly convinced from an experience of fifteen years that all kinds of British goods can be carried from George Town to the head of navigation at 6d. ster. per cwt. He proposes at first to employ barges of only 60 feet keel, 15 feet wide and 8 feet in depth, which will not draw more than two feet of water. But when the country on the Ohio is thickly settled, barges of 150 and 200 tons can be properly made use of. It requires but three days for barges to go down the stream from head waters to Alexandria and eight to ascend."

Franklin's political difficulties probably defeated Ballendine's efforts in London, at any rate he is known to have been circulating a subscription among the prominent gentlemen of Virginia and Maryland in 1774. In his efforts he liberally patronized the *Maryland and Virginia Gazettes*.

From the *Maryland Gazette* of September 8, 1774:

"The subscriber being just arrived from Great Britain with a number of engineers and artificers in order to remove the obstructions to the navigation of the Potowmack River at and above the Lower Falls and thinking himself fully qualified for such an undertaking, agreeable to the proposals before his embarkation to Europe, he is desirous to have a meeting of his principal subscribers and others interested in this necessary work, and considering it most convenient to all concerned to have the same at George Town in Maryland, he proposes that it shall be there on Monday, 26th day of September next. At which time and place he will certainly attend and be ready to lay before them an accurate plan and estimates of the expence, also an Act of the Virginia Assembly, and likewise a subscription from some of the principal proprietors, &c. of the Province of Vandalia now residing in England, for the further encouragement of the proposed undertaking.

"(Signed) JOHN BALLENDINE."



A meeting was held at Georgetown on October 10, attended by Washington, Johnson and other prominent men, who subscribed substantial sums to the following:<sup>48</sup>

“We the subscribers, have considered John Ballendine’s plan and proposal for clearing Potowmack River and do approve it; to enable him to set about that useful and necessary undertaking we do hereby agree and promise severally to contribute such assistance or pay such sums as we respectively subscribe to the trustees named in the said proposals, or to their order, at such times and places and in such proportions as shall be required for the purpose of clearing said river. Witness our hands this 10th. day of Oct. 1774.

“N. B. As nothing effectual can be properly done for less than £30.000, this subscription is not binding unless the value of £30.000 Pennsylvania currency, be subscribed.”

About £8,000 in the various currencies in use was subscribed at the meeting, Washington heading the list with £500 Virginia currency, Ch. Carroll, of Carrollton, following with \$1,000 at 7.6. Thos. Johnson was present and David Ross for the Frederick Company subscribed £400 (was this the company formed by Johnson in 1770?). This meeting was followed by this announcement in the *Maryland Gazette* of October 25:

“A plan and estimate for opening the navigation of Potowmack River above the Falls being approved by many persons interested therein the following gentlemen are appointed Trustees by the subscriber to adjust and settle all matters related thereto; George Washington, George Mason, Thompson Mason, Bryan Fairfax, Daniel McCarty, John Carlyle, John Dalton, Wm. Ramsay, Robert Adam, Wm. Ellzey, John Hough, Jos. Janney, Isaac Lane, Robt. Rutherford, Abram Hite, Jos. Neville of Virginia, Gentlemen—Thos. Johnson Jr.,

<sup>48</sup>From a paper, “Old Georgetown,” read by Mr. Hugh Taggart before the Columbia Historical Society, May 13, 1907. Authority not given.

Launcelot Jaques, Daniel Carroll, David Ross, Robt. Peter, John Murdock, Thos. Richardson, Thos. Johns, Wm. Deakins, Adam Stewart, Richard Thompson, John Hanson, Chas. Beatty, John Cary, Jacob Young, James Marshall, Dan. & Sam. Hughes, Thos. Cresap, Jonathan Hagar, John Stall of Maryland, Gentlemen;—who are requested to meet at George Town on Saturday the 12th of November in order to elect and choose a small and convenient number of the Trustees which shall be a committee to act for the whole. This meeting is judged to be the more necessary as the subscriber is now at work on the locks at the lower Falls on the Maryland side of the river with what hands he has.

“(Signed) JOHN BALLENDINE.”

From the *Virginia Gazette* of January 14, 1775:

“FALLS OF THE POTOWMACK, Dec. 22, 1774.

“At a meeting of the Trustees for opening the navigation of Potowmack River held at George Town Dec. 1, 1774 Thos. Johnson, Jr., Attorney-at-law, Wm. Deakins, Adam Stewart, Thos. Johns, Thos. Richardson, of Georgetown, merchants,—Wm. Ellzey, Robt. Alexander, Philip Alexander of Virginia present, who ordered and directed that the subscriber should on the credit and at the risk of the above named Trustees hire fifty slaves to labor in cutting the canals around the several Falls of said River; and at another meeting of Trustees for the purpose aforesaid held at Alexandria 19th inst., present Geo. Washington, John Carlyle, John Dalton, Wm. Ramsay, Gentlemen of Virginia together with many of the Trustees at the former meeting, who recognized and approved of the order for hiring fifty slaves and agreed to become equally liable. In consequence of which order of the Trustees I hereby give notice that I want to hire negro men for the ensuing year for the purpose above mentioned. Any person inclining to hire the whole or any part of them may see the proceedings of the said Trustees subscribed with their respective hands in my custody.

“(Signed) JOHN BALLENDINE.”

Again in the issue for October 28, 1775:

“FALLS OF THE JAMES RIVER, Oct. 25. 1775.

“At the earnest solicitation of many gentlemen on Potowmack and influenced by my own interest on that river I have been endeavoring to open its navigation from tide water upwards, and have been at considerable expense in preparation &c. to forward that useful work, but the necessity of a Maryland Act of Assembly co-operating with one passed in Virginia and which I have not been able to obtain has obliged me to decline it for the present. This disappointment would be the more affecting if it did not afford me an opportunity of employing my time and attention in opening and extending the navigation of James River, which though a work less interesting to me is of equal utility to the public. But to make my interest in some measure correspond with the public's I have paid £360 sterling to Mr. Patrick Couatts for the lands situated on the river where the water must be taken out into the canal & which I have began and done some part of the canal with other improvements very expensive.

“I therefore inform the publick that having a fee simple therein, I am going on with the canal at my own expense, and will farther risk my whole fortune & time on the success of my undertaking, and desire no aid or assistance until I make this navigation safe and easy to Shockoe warehouse; expecting never-the-less the more large & generous contributions from all who benefit when the work is done.

“(Signed) JOHN BALLENDINE.

“ I want to hire 100 slaves for the above purpose and should be glad to treat with any person or persons inclinable; at the same time could assist with the best part of their winter clothing, if not otherwise provided.”

But the lowering of another war cloud effectually terminated all these efforts for public improvements and we have no record of attempts to open an easier communication with the great west for ten years,

although settlers in an ever increasing number followed the sun on the old "Nemocolin Path."

Ballendine's furnace at Richmond was offered at sheriff's sale. His proprietary rights there, however, received recognition in the charter secured in 1784 for the "James River and Potowmack Companies."

When the Potowmack Company was organized in 1785 for the purpose of improving the navigation of that river, John Ballendine was one of the first subscribers to the stock.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Hening Statutes of Va., Vol. 11, p. 580, 1784. "And be it farther enacted, That so much of every act, and acts within the purview of this Act, shall be, and the same is hereby repealed. Provided, nevertheless, That nothing in this act shall be construed so as to take away the right which the representatives of John Ballendine have to that part of the canal which is already begun, and to all the advantages resulting from the same, but the same shall be valued by a jury in manner and form as before directed and the said representatives shall be entitled to so many shares in the said Company, and to so much of the surplus water as the said jury shall determine, or they shall receive, at their option, the value thereof in money, to be estimated by the said jury."

PART II.

THE PATOWMACK COMPANY  
1785 to 1828.

From Its Unpublished Records.

(By Permission of the Trustees of the Chesapeake and Ohio  
Canal Company.)









GREAT SEAL OF THE PATOWMACK COMPANY  
(Reproduced from Original by the Maurice Joyce Co.)

## THE PATOWMACK COMPANY, 1785-1828.

(Read before the Society, November 21, 1911.)

During the long serious years of the Revolutionary War emigration to the fertile country west of the mountains increasingly continued. Three routes were popular: Boone's path through Cumberland Gap, by the mountain passes of Pennsylvania, and by the most direct and best improved road, so often the recipient of public funds, from Fort Cumberland to Old Fort Red Stone on the Monongahela. It had been opened in 1748 by the Ohio Company, made fit for wagons in military service in 1753-4, thoroughly graded and bridged by Braddock in 1754, well repaired by Virginia in 1766 and thereafter kept in condition for the continuous traffic to the west. To it converged the two routes from Baltimore and Winchester; it was also much used by Philadelphia traders.<sup>1</sup>

Washington from his youth had regarded the western country with its trade as of incalculable value to Virginia; we have seen his effort in the Legislature to secure means to utilize the Potomac River for transportation,<sup>2</sup> and his cheerful assistance in the Ballentine scheme, utopian as it was. The idea did not entirely give way to the excitement of war; Maryland business men were constantly revolving schemes for easier communication with western settlers. In the spring of 1783 the legislature passed an act appointing Charles Beatty, of Montgomery County, and

<sup>1</sup> See Washington's letter to Colonel Bouquet in Part I.

<sup>2</sup> Hening, "Act of the Virginia Legislature in 1772."

Normand Bruce, of Frederick, commissioners to examine the Potomac River and make an estimate of the cost of making it navigable, and they had drawn £250 for preliminary expense.<sup>3</sup> If they made a report it is not now to be found.

During the tedious waiting for the dismissal of the army, Washington often thought of his lands on the Ohio and of a more ready access to them, as well as of the political significance of the isolated settlements. His letters to Lafayette and Chastellux are of peculiar interest in this connection.

“TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

“PRINCETON, 12 October, 1783.

“ . . . I have it in contemplation to make a tour thro’ all the Eastern States, thence into Canada, thence up the St. Lawrence and thro’ the lakes to Detroit, thence to Lake Michigan by land or water, thence thro’ the Western Country, by the river Illinois to the river Mississippi, and down the same to New Orleans, thence into Georgia by the way of Pensacola, and then thro’ the two Carolinas home. A great tour this, you will say. Probably it may take place nowhere but in imagination, tho’ it is my *wish* to begin it in the latter end of April of next year.”

“TO THE CHEVALIER DE CHASTELLUX.

“PRINCETON, 12 october, 1783.

“Having the appearance, and indeed the enjoyment of peace, without a final declaration of it, I, who am only waiting for the ceremonials, or till the British forces shall have taken leave of New York, am placed in an awkward and disagreeable situation, it being my anxious desire to quit the walks of public life, and under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree to seek those enjoyments and that relaxation,

<sup>3</sup> Original draft among papers of 1783 in Maryland Historical Society collections.

which a mind, that has been constantly upon the stretch for more than eight years, stands so much in need of."

. . . . .  
"I have lately made a tour through the Lakes George and Champlain, as far as Crown Point. Then returning to Schenectady, I proceeded up the Mohawk River to Fort Schuyler (formerly Fort Stanwix), and crossed over to the Wood Creek, which empties into the Oneida Lake, and affords the water communication with Lake Ontario. I then traversed the country to the head of the eastern branch of the Susquehanna, and viewed the Lake Otsego, and the portage between that Lake and the Mohawk River at Canajoharie. Prompted by these actual observations, I could not help taking a more contemplative and extensive view of the vast inland navigation of these United States, from maps and the information of others; and could not but be struck with the immense diffusion and importance of it, and with the goodness of that Providence, which has dealt her favors to us with so profuse a hand. Would to God we may have wisdom enough to improve them. I shall not rest contented, till I have explored the western country, and traversed those lines, or great part of them, which have given bounds to a new empire. But when it may, if it ever shall, happen, I dare not say, as my first attention must be given to the deranged situation of my private concerns, which are not a little injured by almost nine years' absence and total disregard of them. . . . "

On the occasion of the resignation of his commission as commander-in-chief of the army Washington spent several days in Annapolis, where the congress of the United States was then in session. The State legislature was also in session. Certainly the opportunities were improved for exchange of opinions on this engrossing subject, in which Thos. Johnson at least was equally enthusiastic, and Thos. Jefferson discursive as usual.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Annals of Annapolis," David Ridgely, 1840.

While still enjoying the relaxation of rest at home, he wrote the following beautiful letters:

“TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

“MOUNT VERNON, 1 February, 1784.

“At length, my dear Marquis, I am become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac; and under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am dolacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier, who is ever in pursuit of fame, the statesman, whose watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own, perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe was insufficient for us all, and the courtier, who is always watching the countenance of his prince, in hopes of catching a gracious smile, can have very little conception. I have not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order for my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers.”

“TO MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX.

MOUNT VERNON, 20 February, 1784.

“ . . . I am just beginning to experience that ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not until lately I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as soon as I waked in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day; and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, nor had any thing to do with public transactions.

“I feel now, however, as I conceive a wearied traveller must do, who, after treading many a painful step with a heavy burthen on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached

the haven to which all the former were directed; and from his housetop is looking back, and tracing with an eager eye the meanders by which he escaled the quicksands and mires which lay in his way; and into which none but the all-powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events could have prevented his falling."

Neither master nor mistress found the anticipated calm and leisure; the long neglect of business and household were to be repaired, old friends and neighbors were to be entertained; but amid all the imperative demands upon mind and time Washington soon found opportunities for conference and correspondence with many prominent and influential men in the country on the important topic of communication with the west; George Mason, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson were confidential friends, often in earnest consultation about the library fire at Mount Vernon. The letters of March to and from Jefferson are interesting and indicative of the general interest.

"THOS. JEFFERSON TO GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON.

ANNAPO LIS, March 6, 1784.

" . . . The present hurry forbids me to write to you on a subject I have much at heart, the approaching & opening the Navigation of the Ohio & Potowmac. I will trouble you by the next post."

"March 15,

" . . . It (western boundary) will preserve to us all the upper parts of Yohogany & Cheat-rivers within which much will be done to open these which are the true doors to the Western commerce. The union of this navigation with that of the Potowmac is a subject on which I mentioned that I would take the liberty of writing to you—I am sure its value and practicability are well known to you. This is the moment, however, for seizing it if ever we mean to have it. All the world is becoming commercial. . . . For the trade of the Ohio



or that which shall come into it from its own waters of the Mississippi, it is nearer to Alexandria than to New York by 730 miles & is interrupted by one portage only. Nature then has declared in favor of the Potowmac and thro' that channel offers to pour into our lap the whole commerce of the Western world. But unfortunately by the Hudson is already open & known in practice; ours is still to be opened. . . . It behoves us then to open our doors to it."

"TO THOMAS JEFFERSON IN CONGRESS.

"MOUNT VERNON, 29 march, 1784.

"*Dear Sir*, It was not in my power to answer your favor of the 15th by the last post, for the reason then assigned. I wish I may be able to do it to your satisfaction now, as I am obliged to pay attention to the other company, the Governor being gone.

"My opinion coincides perfectly with yours respecting the practicability of an easy and short communication between the waters of the Ohio and Potomac, of the advantages of that communication and the preference it has over all others, and of the policy there would be in this State of Maryland to adopt and render it facile. But I confess to you freely, I have no expectation, that the public will adopt the measure; for, besides the jealousies that prevail, and the difficulty of proportioning such funds as may be allotted for the purposes you have mentioned, there are two others, which, in my opinion, will be harder yet to surmount. These are (if I have not imbibed too unfavorable an opinion of my countrymen) the impracticability of bringing the great and truly wise policy of the measure to their view, and the difficulty of extracting money from them for such a purpose, if it could be done; for it appears to me, maugre all the sufferings of the public creditors, breach of public faith, and loss of reputation, that payment of the taxes, which are already laid, will be postponed as long as possible. How then are we to expect new ones for purposes more remote?

"I am not so disinterested in this matter as you are; but I am made very happy to find that a man of discernment and



liberality, who has no particular interest in the plan, thinks as I do, who have lands in the country, the value of which would be enhanced by the adoption of such a measure.

“More than ten years ago I was struck with the importance of it; and, despairing of any aid from the public, I became a principal mover of a bill to empower a number of subscribers to undertake at their own expense, on conditions which were expressed, the extension of the navigation from tide water to Will’s Creek, about one hundred and fifty miles; and I devoutly wish that this may not be the only expedient by which it can be effected now. To get this business in motion, I was obliged even upon that ground to comprehend James River, in order to remove the jealousies, which arose from the attempt to extend the navigation of the Potomac. The plan however, was in a tolerably good train, when I set out for Cambridge in 1775, and would have been in an excellent way, had it not been for the difficulties, which were met with in the Maryland Assembly from the opposition which was given (according to report) by the Baltimore merchants, who were alarmed, and perhaps not without cause, at the consequence of water transportation to Georgetown of the produce, which usually came to their market by land.

“The local interest of that place, joined to the shortsighted politics or contracted views of another part of the Assembly, gave Mr. Thomas Johnson, who was a warm promoter of the scheme on the north side of the Potomac, a great deal of trouble. In this situation I left matters when I took command of the army. The war afterwards called men’s attention to different objects, and all the money they could or would raise was applied to other purposes. But with you I am satisfied that not a moment ought to be lost in re-commencing this business, as I know the Yorkers will lose no time to remove every obstacle in the way of the other communication, as soon as the posts of Oswego and Niagara are surrendered; and I shall be mistaken if they do not build vessels for the navigation of the Lakes, which will supersede the necessity of *coasting* on either side.

“It appears to me that the interest and policy of Maryland

are proportionably concerned with those of Virginia, to remove obstructions, and to invite the trade of the western country into the channel you have mentioned. You will have frequent opportunities of learning the sentiments of the principal characters of that State, respecting this matter; and I wish if it should fall in your way, that you would discourse with Mr. Thomas Johnson, formerly governor of Maryland, on this subject. How far, upon mature consideration, I may depart from the resolution I had formed, of living perfectly at my ease, exempt from every form of responsibility, is more than I can at present absolutely determine. The sums granted, the manner of granting them, powers and objects, would merit consideration. The trouble, if my situation at the time would permit me to engage in a work of the sort, would be set at nought; and the immense advantages, which this country would derive from the measure, would be no small stimulus to the undertaking, if that undertaking could be made to comport with those ideas, and that line of conduct, with which I meant to glide gently down the current of life, and it did not interfere with any other plan I might have in contemplation."

"I will not enter upon the subject of commerce. It has its advantages and disadvantages; but which of them preponderates, is not now the question. From trade our citizens will not be restrained, and therefore it behoves us to place it in the most convenient channels under proper regulations, freed as much as possible from those vices, which luxury, the consequence of wealth and power, naturally introduce." Etc., etc.

It only required the earnest persistence and powerful influence of Washington to secure the incorporation of the first company for making easy an intercommunication with the great west. This company was the lineal successor of the pioneer Ohio Company and included the Frederick Company and the Ballendine adventurers. Its successor is the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, which I believe is operated under the same charter.

We have intimation of some opposition to such a scheme in the letters written General Washington by one Stephen Sayre, of George Town, which are on file in the Library of Congress. In the one dated October 10, 1784, is suggested a "Tontine for raising money for the improvement of the navigation of the Powtowmack" and scouts the idea that any locks would be necessary; he had a plan of his own more practicable to propose instead. In another letter dated August 8 he urged that "no time be lost in removing prejudices against the work which are worse than the rocks in our way."

One great obstacle in the way of any movement for utilizing the Potomac was the diversity of the commercial laws of the two states. By some carelessness in the legislation of 1776 Virginia had ceded to Maryland jurisdiction over the river, reserving only the right of free navigation. The situation was thus rendered almost intolerable and there was a popular demand for an adjustment of traffic regulations. James Madison, Jr., an able and earnest young man, was chairman of the committee on commerce in the lower house of the Virginia legislature. On June 28, 1784, the following resolutions which he introduced were carried:

"Whereas; Great inconveniences are found to result from the want of some concerted regulations between this state and the state of Maryland touching the jurisdiction and navigation of the river Potomac; Resolved that George Mason, Edmund Randolph, James Madison, Jr. and Alex. Henderson, Esqs. be appointed commissioners and that they or any three of them do meet such commissioners as may be appointed on the part of Maryland and in concert with them frame such liberal and equitable regulations concerning said river as may be mutually advantageous to the two states and that they make report

thereon to the General Assembly. Resolved; That the Executive be requested to notify the State of Maryland of the above appointment, with the object of it, and desire its concurrence in the proposition."

In Maryland under the lead of Thomas Johnson, then in the state senate, the proposition was accepted by the Assembly and Thos. Johnson, Thos. Stone, Samuel Chase and Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer appointed conferees to meet the Virginians at Alexandria March 20, 1785. The result, known as the Mount Vernon compact, was accepted and ratified by both legislatures. The outcome has been considered as the origin of the call for the constitutional convention held at Philadelphia in 1787.<sup>5</sup>

During the summer and fall of 1784 many conferences were held in both states and the public became very enthusiastic over the prospect of a great interstate improvement. According to one of Madison's letters to Jefferson it is evident that the Baltimore merchants still opposed the scheme, but western Maryland had grown powerful in twelve years and western Maryland demanded release from Baltimore monopoly and extortion.

In the cool days of September General Washington set out for a journey over the mountains to settle some disputes on his lands near Fort Pitt, and, as he wrote in his diary on the 4th, "one object of this journey is to obtain information of the nearest & best communication between the eastern and western Waters, and to facilitate as much as in me lay, the Inland Navigation of the Potowmack." Six weeks were spent on this ride of 680 miles, going over the familiar Nemacolin Path, returning by a more southerly route to seek a possible good portage from the Potomac to the Cheat, state

<sup>5</sup> John Fiske in "Critical Period."

policy dictating avoidance of Pennsylvania territory. He found a long, rough and perilous way over indistinct mountain trails, but no feasible portage. On this journey he encountered Albert Gallatin in a frontier settlement. At Red Stone he very possibly met Jacob Joder, who had recently returned from a most remarkable venture; in 1782 he had taken a boat load of flour down the rivers to New Orleans, there disposed of cargo and boat, invested in furs from the northwest which he took to Havana and exchanged for sugar which he sold in Philadelphia for a handsome profit. Thus would Washington be reminded of the trade and political possibilities of free navigation of the Mississippi; this political interest was a great factor in his determination to effect the Potomac transportation. The territory of the United States extended to the Mississippi, which was nature's outlet for the commerce of the immense trans-Appalachian region; the lower river was controlled by the Spanish—it would be possible for them to induce the people of the southwest to unite with them; also the traders from Canada were very active along the Great Lakes where Great Britain retained possession of the frontier posts—surely speedy action was necessary if Virginia would profit by the opportunities now open to her.

On the way west he had spent a night at Bath, where we learn from the *Maryland Gazette* of 13 June, 1784, James Rumsey was “at the time associated with Robert Throckmorton in keeping a very commodious boarding house at the sign of the Liberty Pole and Flag.” Rumsey seized this opportunity to interest the great man in his latest invention for propelling boats against the stream by a mechanical contrivance and exhibited his model which worked perfectly, and secured a certificate from General Washington. This



was not a model of the steamboat publicly exhibited at Shepherd's Town December 3 and 11, 1786, but the acquaintance later brought results interesting to us in our subject.

Immediately upon his return to Mt. Vernon Washington prepared a report of his journey which he enclosed in an eloquent letter to Governor Harrison, in which he enclosed a bill for an act incorporating a company for opening the Potomac navigation. The bill was also sent to Thos. Johnson of Maryland accompanied by the following hitherto unpublished letter:

“MOUNT VERNON, Oct. 15, 1784.

“*Dear Sir*, On a supposition that you are now at Annapolis, the petition of the Potowmack Company is enclosed to your care. A duplicate has been forwarded to the Assembly of this state; the fate of which I have not yet heard, but entertain no doubt of its favorable reception; as there are many auspicious proofs of liberality and justice already exhibited in the proceedings of the present session. I hope the same spirit will mark the proceedings of yours. The want of energy in the Federal government—the pulling of one State & party of States against another & the commotion amongst the Eastern people have sunk our national character much below par; and has brought our politics and credit to the brink of a precipice; a step or two further must plunge us into a Sea of Troubles, perhaps anarchy and confusion. I trust that a proper sense of justice & unanimity in those States which have not drunk so deep of the cup of folly may yet retrieve our affairs. But no time is to be lost in essaying them.

“I have written to no gentlemen in your Assembly respecting the Potowmack business but yourself. The justice of the cause and your management of it will insure success. With great regard and respect I am Dear Sir,” etc.<sup>6</sup>

The bill was passed in the Virginia Assembly in October, in Maryland in November.

<sup>6</sup> From original.

Of a mass meeting called for the discussion of the project at Alexandria we have only the account published in the *Virginia Gazette* of December 4:

“At a numerous and respectable meeting held the 15th. of last month at Alexandria by gentlemen of this state and Maryland to deliberate and consult on the vast great political and commercial object, the rendering navigable the Potowmack River from tide water, it was unanimously resolved that every possible effort ought to be exerted to render those waters navigable to their utmost sources. . . . This is perhaps a work of more political than commercial consequence, as it will be one of the grandest chains for preserving the Federal Union. The western world will have free access to us and we shall be one and the same people whatever system of European politics may be adopted.”

When Washington went to Richmond on the 15th of November to meet the Marquis de Lafayette he conferred with many of the members of the Assembly on the subject and then accompanied the Marquis to Annapolis. To Madison and Joseph Jones he wrote from Mt. Vernon on the 28th:

“In one word, it should seem to me, that if the public cannot take it up with efficient funds, & with out those delays which might be involved by a limping conduct it had better be placed in the hands of a corporate company.”

The bills not being entirely satisfactory as introduced into the two state legislatures a conference was arranged for delegates from both to meet in Annapolis.

The report, as recorded, is as follows:

“At a meeting in the city of Annapolis, on the 22d day of December. 1784, of the commissioners appointed by the Commonwealth of Virginia to confer with persons authorized on the part of the State of Maryland, upon the subject of opening and improving the navigation of the river Potomae, and con-



certing a plan for opening a proper road between the waters of the Potomac and the most convenient western waters, and a committee appointed by the Senate and House of Delegates of Maryland, to meet the Commissioners of Virginia for the purpose aforesaid—were present,

“General Washington and General Gates from Virginia;

“The Hon. Thomas Stone, Samuel Hughes, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Esquires, of the Senate; and

“John Cadwallader, Samuel Chase, John Debutts, George Digges, Philip Key, Gustavus Scott, and Joseph Dashiell, Esquires, of the House of Delegates.

“General Washington in the chair; Randolph B. Latimer appointed Clerk.

“The conference proceeded to take the subject-matters to them referred, into their consideration, and, thereupon, came to the following resolutions:

“That it is the opinion of this conference, that the removing the obstructions in the river Potomac, and the making the same capable of navigation from tide water as far up the north branch of the said river as may be convenient and practicable, will increase the commerce of the Commonwealth of Virginia and State of Maryland, and greatly promote the political interests of the United States, by forming a free and easy communication with the People settled on the western waters, already very considerable in their numbers, and rapidly increasing from the mildness of the climate and the fertility of the soil.

“That it is the opinion of the conference, that the proposal to establish a company for opening the river Potomac, merits the approbation of, and deserves to be patronized by, Virginia and Maryland, and that a similar law ought to be passed by the legislatures of the two governments, to promote and encourage so laudable an undertaking.

“That it is the opinion of this conference, that it would be proper for Virginia and Maryland each to become subscribers to the amount of fifty shares, and that such subscription would evince to the public the opinion of the legislatures of the practicability and great utility of the plan, and that the example

would encourage individuals to embark in the measure, give vigor and security to so important an undertaking, and be a substantial proof to our brethren of the Western Territory, of our disposition to connect ourselves with them by the strongest bonds of friendship and mutual interest.

“That is the opinion of this conference, that an act of Assembly of Virginia ‘For opening and extending the navigation of the river Potomac from Fort Cumberland to tide water,’ ought to be repealed.

“That it is the opinion of this conference, from the best information they have obtained, that a road to begin about the mouth of Stony River may be carried in about twenty or twenty-two miles to the Dunker Bottom on Cheat river; from whence, this conference are of opinion, that batteaux navigation may be made, though, perhaps, at considerable expense. That if such navigation cannot be effected, by continuing the road about twenty miles farther, it would intersect the Monongahela, where the navigation is good and has been long practised.

“That a road from Fort Cumberland to Turkey Foot would be about thirty-three miles, from whence an improvement of the Youghiogeny river would be necessary, though probably it might be done at less expense than the navigation of the Cheat river could be rendered convenient from the Dunker Bottom.

“That it is a general opinion, that the navigation on Potomac may be extended to the most convenient point below, or even above the mouth of Stony river, from whence to set off a road to Cheat river; and this conference is satisfied that that road, from the nature of the country through which it may pass, wholly through Virginia and Maryland, will be much better than a road can be made at any reasonable expense from Fort Cumberland to the Youghiogeny, which must be carried partly through Pennsylvania.

“That it is the opinion of this conference, that, if the navigation on Potomac should be carried to about the mouth of Stony river, a communication with the western waters, through a road from thence, extended even to Monongalia, would be preferable in most points of view to that by a road from Fort

Cumberland to Turkey Foot, the only other way practicable, and in any great degree useful; that the communication by a road from Fort Cumberland to the present navigable parts of the Youghiogeny, and thence through that river, though in the opinion of this conference a second object only, would facilitate the intercourse with a very respectable number of the western settlers, contribute much to their convenience and accommodation, and that the benefits resulting therefrom, to these states, would compensate the expense of improving the road.

“The conference therefore, recommends that the Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland appoint skilful persons to view and accurately examine and survey Potomac, from Fort Cumberland to the mouth of Stony river, and the Cheat, from about the Dunker Bottom to the present navigable part thereof, and if they judge the navigation can be extended to a convenient distance above Fort Cumberland, that they may from thence survey, lay off, and mark, a road to the Cheat river, or continue the same to the navigation, as they may think will most effectually establish the communication between the said eastern and western waters. And that the said road be cut and cleared, not less than eighty feet, and properly improved and maintained in repair, not less than forty nor more than fifty feet wide, at the joint expense of both States; and your conferees beg leave to recommend that each State appropriate three thousand three hundred and thirty three and one third dollars for the purpose; and this conference are further of opinion, that the States of Virginia and Maryland request permission of the State of Pennsylvania to lay out and improve a road through such part of that State as may be necessary, in the best and most proper direction from Fort Cumberland to the navigable part of the Youghiogeny; and, on such permission being obtained, that proper persons be appointed to survey, mark, clear, and improve, such road, at the equal expense of Virginia and Maryland.

“Which are submitted to the consideration of the Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland.

“By order,”

<sup>r</sup> From original.

To Madison General Washington immediately wrote this report:

“ANNAPOLIS. 28 Dec. 1784.

“*Dear Sir;*

“I have been favored with your letter of the 11th. The proceedings of the Conference and the Act and the Resolution of the Legislature consequent thereupon (herewith transmitted to the Assembly), are so full and explanatory of the motive which governed in the business, that it is scarce necessary for me to say anything in addition to them, except that this State seems highly impressed with the importance of the object which we have had under consideration, and are desirous of seeing accomplished.

“We have reduced most of the Tolls from what they were in the first Bill, and have added something to a few others—upon the whole we have made them as low as we conceived from the best information before us, and such estimates as we had means to calculate upon as they can be fixed without hazarding the plan altogether.—We made the Value of the Commodity the governing principle in the establishment of the Tolls;—but having had an eye to some bulky articles of produce, & to the encouragement of the growth and manufacture of some others, as much as to prevent a tedious enumeration of the different species of all, we departed from the general rule in many instances.—The rates of the tollage as now fixed, may still appear high to some of the Southern gentlemen when they compare them with those on James River, but as there is no comparison in the expense & risk of the two undertakings, so neither ought there to be in the Tolls.

“I am fully persuaded that the gentlemen who were appointed and who have had this matter under consideration were actuated by no other motives than to hit (if they could do so) upon such a happy medium as would not be burthensome to individuals or give jealousy to the people on one hand, nor discouragement to adventurers on the other.—To secure success and to give vigor to the undertaking, it was judged advisable for each State to contribute (upon the terms of private subscribers) to the expense of it, especially

as it might have a happy influence on the minds of the Western Settlers, and it may be observed here, that only part of this money can be called for immediately, provided the work goes on—And afterwards only in the proportion of its progress.

“Though there is no obligation upon the State to adopt this (if it is inconvenient, or repugnant to their wishes) yet I should be highly pleased to hear that they had done so.—(Our advantages will most assuredly be equal to those of Maryland, and our public spirit ought not in my opinion to be less)—as also the resolutions respecting the roads of communication, both of which tho’ they look in some degree to different objects, are both very important—that of the Yohiogany (thro’ Pennsylvania) is particularly so for the Furs and Peltry of the Lakes, because it is the most direct rout by which they can be transported;—whilst it is exceedingly convenient to the people who inhabit the Ohio, (or Allegany) above Fort Pitt, the lower part of the Monongahela and all the Yohiogany.

“Matters might perhaps have been better digested if more time had been taken, but the fear of not getting the report to Richmond before the Assembly would have risen, occasioned more hurry than accuracy—or even real despatch—But to alter the Act now, further than to accommodate it to circumstances when it is essential, or to remedy an obvious error, if any should be discovered, will not do. The bill passed this Assembly with only nine dissenting voices and got thro’ both Houses in a day—so earnest were the members of getting it to you in time.

“It is now near 12 at night, and I am writing with an Aching head, having been constantly employed in this business since the 22nd. without assistance from my colleagues, Gen. Gates having been sick the whole time & Colo. Blackburn not attending.

“But for this I would be more explicit.

“I am with great esteem & regard Dear Sir,

“Yr. Most Obt. Ser’t.

“GEO. WASHINGTON.



“I am ashamed to send such a letter but cannot give you a fairer one, G. W.

“Jas. Madison, Esqr.”<sup>s</sup>

The articles of the compact between the states, known as “the Mount Vernon,” were drawn up and duly forwarded to the respective legislatures at the fall sessions of 1785. The sixth article reads:

“The river Potomac shall be considered as a common highway for the purposes of navigation and commerce to the citizens of Virginia and Maryland, and of the United States and to all other persons in amity with the said states trading to or from Virginia or Maryland.

“Seventh;—The citizens of each state respectively shall have full property in the shores of the Potomac rive adjoining their lands.”

The compact was approved by both legislatures with the farther stipulation introduced by Thomas Stone in the Maryland senate:

“That joint application be made to Congress for consent to form a compact for the purpose of affording in and in just proportion naval protection to Chesapeake Bay and Potomac river which may be left unprovided for by Congress;—That currencies should be regulated;—That duties and imposts should be the same in both states; That commissioners should be annually appointed to regulate commerce;—That Delaware and Pennsylvania should be notified and requested to join with Virginia and Maryland.”

The amendment was sent to Virginia and ratified.

This compact between Virginia and Maryland in the interest of the Potomac improvement is another political incident in the history of the development of this route to the west and as before stated has been considered by Madison and other statesmen as the initial

<sup>s</sup> From Madison MSS. in the Library of Congress.

step toward calling the national convention in 1787 which framed our constitution.

Meanwhile Washington with unwonted enthusiasm was writing to absent friends and wielding all of his great influence to secure support for the "adventure," as such undertakings were appropriately called. To Richard Henry Lee, then president of Congress, he wrote December 14:

"The Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland have now under consideration the extension of the inland navigation of the Rivers Potowmac and James, and opening a communication between them and the western waters. They seem fully impressed with the political as well as the commercial advantages, which would result from the accomplishment of these great objects; and I hope will embrace the present moment to put them in a train for execution. Would it not at the same time be worthy of the wisdom and attention of Congress to have the western waters well explored, the navigation of them fully ascertained, accurately laid down, and a complete and perfect map made of the country; as least as far westwardly as the Miamies, running into the Ohio and Lake Erie, and to see how the waters of these communicate with the river St. Joseph, which empties into the Lake Michigan, and with the Wabash? For I cannot forbear observing that the Miami village, in Hutchin's map, if it and the waters are laid down with accuracy, points to a very important point for the Union. The expense attending such an undertaking could not be great; the advantages would be unbounded; for sure I am, nature has made such a display of her bounties in those regions, that the more the country is explored, the more it will rise in estimation, consequently the greater will be the revenue to the Union."

Again, February 8, 1785:

"Since my last I have had the honor to receive your favors of the 26th of December and 16th of January. I have now the pleasure to inform you that the Assemblies of Virginia and



Maryland have enacted laws, of which the inclosed is a copy. They are exactly similar in both States. At the same time and at the joint and equal expense of the two governments, the sum of 6666.66 is voted for opening and keeping in repair a road from the highest practicable navigation of this river to that of the river Cheat, or Monongahela, as commissioners, who are appointed to survey and lay out the same, shall find most convenient and beneficial to the western settlers; and they have concurred in an application to the state of Pennsylvania for permission to open another road from Fort Cumberland to the Youghiogheny, at the Three Forks, or Turkey Foot."

With the final action of the Virginia Assembly on the 5th of January, 1785, the Patowmack Company was formally launched, subscription books were opened at Richmond, Alexandria and Winchester in Virginia, and at Annapolis, Frederick and Georgetown in Maryland, to be closed by the tenth of May.

In the *Maryland Gazette* of February appeared this advertisement:

**"PATOWMACK CANAL!**

"By Virtue of an act of the last General Assembly of Maryland entitled 'An Act for establishing a company for opening and extending the Navigation of the River Patowmack' notice is hereby given that the laudable subscriptions so essentially necessary to accomplish a work fraught with such universal advantages is now opened at Annapolis where it will so continue until the 10th of May next in the hands of

"CHRISTOPHER RICHMOND, JOHN DAVIDSON."

In January Madison, whose assistance had been so valuable, wrote to Jefferson, whose interest we perceive by his letters was also most lively.

"Shortly after his (Washington with Lafayette) departure, a joint memorial from a number of citizens of Virginia and

Maryland, interested in the Potomac, was presented to the Assembly, stating the practicability and importance of the work, and praying for an act of incorporation, and grant of perpetual toll to the undertaking of it. A bill had been prepared at the same meeting which produced the memorial, and was transmitted to Richmond at the same time. A like memorial and bill went to Annapolis, where the Legislature of Maryland was sitting.

“The Assembly here lent a ready ear to the project; but a difficulty arose from the height of the tolls proposed, the danger of destroying the uniformity essential in the proceedings of the two States by altering them, and the scarcity of time for negotiating with Maryland a bill satisfactory to both States. Short as the time was, however, the attempt was decided on, and the negotiation committed to General Washington himself. General Gates, who happened to be in the way, and Col. Blackburn, were associated with him. The latter did not act; the two former pushed immediately to Annapolis, where the sickness of General Gates threw the whole agency on General Washington. By his exertions, in concert with Committees of the two branches of the Legislature, an amendment of the plan was digested in a few days, passed through both Houses in one day, with nine dissenting voices only, and dispatched for Richmond, where it arrived just in time for the close of the Session. A corresponding Act was immediately introduced, and passed without opposition.

“The Scheme declares that the subscribers shall be an incorporated body; that there shall be 500 shares, amounting to about 220,000 dollars, of which the States of Virginia and Maryland are each to take 50 shares; that the tolls shall be collected in three portions, at the three principal falls, and with the works vest as real estate in the members of the Company; and that the works shall be begun within one year and finished within ten years, under the penalty of entire forfeiture.

“In addition to these acts, joint resolutions have passed the Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland for clearing a road from the head of Potomac navigation to Cheat river, or if neces-

sary to Monongalia, and 3.333 1/3 dollars are voted for the work by each State. Pennsylvania is also to be applied to by the Governors of the two States for leave to clear a road through her jurisdiction, if it should be found necessary, from Potomac to Yohogania; to which the Assembly here have added a proposition to unite with Maryland in representing to Pennsylvania the advantages which will accrue on a part of her citizens from opening the proposed communication with the sea, and the reasonableness of her securing to those who are to be at the expense the use of her waters as a thoroughfare to and from the Country beyond her limits, free from all imposts and restrictions whatever, and as a channel of trade with her citizens, free from greater imposts than may be levied on any other channel of importation. This resolution did not pass till it was too late to refer it to General Washington's negociations with Maryland. It now makes a part of the task allotted to the Commissioners who are to settle with Maryland the jurisdiction and navigation of Potomac, below tide water. By another Resolution of this State, persons are to be forthwith appointed by the Executive to survey the upper parts of James river, the country through which a road must pass to the navigable waters of the New River, and these waters down to the Ohio. I am told by a member of the Assembly, who seems well acquainted both with the intermediate ground and with the western waters in question, that a road of 25 or 30 miles in length will link these waters with James River, and will strike a branch of the former which yields a fine navigation, and falls into the main stream of the Kenhawa below the obstructions lying in this river down to the Ohio. If these be facts James River will have a great superiority over Potomac, the road from which to Cheat river is, indeed, computed by General Washington at 20 miles only, but he thinks the expence of making the latter navigable will require a continuation of the road to Monongalia, which will lengthen it to forty miles. The road to Yohogania is computed by the General at 30 miles."

“The Treasurer is by this act directed to subscribe 50 shares

in the Potomac and 100 shares in the James River companies, which shall vest in General Washington and his heirs. This mode of adding some substantial to the many rewards bestowed on him was deemed least injurious to his delicacy, as well as least dangerous as a precedent. It was submitted in place of a direct pension, urged on the House by the indiscreet zeal of some of his friends. Though it will not be an equivalent succor in all respects, it will save the General from subscriptions which would have oppressed his finances; and if the schemes be executed within the period fixed, may yield a revenue for some years before the term of his. At all events, it will demonstrate the grateful wishes of his country, and will promote the object which he has so much at heart. The earnestness with which he espouses the undertaking is hardly to be described, and shews that a mind like his, capable of great views, cannot bear a vacancy; and surely he could not have chosen an occupation more worthy of succeeding to that of establishing the political rights of his Country than the patronage of works for the extensive and lasting improvement of its natural advantages; works which will double the value of half the lands within the Commonwealth, will extend its commerce, link with its interests those of the Western States, and lessen the emigration of its citizens by enhancing the profitableness of situations which they now desert in search of better."

. . . . .

At an early hour on the 17th of May, 1785, an unusual number of the gentry of Virginia and Maryland met in Alexandria to organize the much heralded company for improving the navigation of the Potomac. After a mid-day banquet they were called to order in the assembly room, so often the scene of festivity, by His Excellency General Washington. In brief introductory remarks he expressed his pleasure in meeting so large and representative a company, referred to the magnitude of the proposed enterprise—its political as well as commercial significance—and assured his audi-

tors of the certainty of ultimate reimbursement to the subscribers. Responses followed in the same confident strain and the meeting proceeded to the business of organization.

The minutes of the meeting as transcribed by John Potts, Jr., are among the Gilmor papers in the collections of the Maryland Historical Society, who courteously have permitted a copy. The originals are not to be found.

“ALEXANDRIA, 17th. May, 1785.

“This day & at this Town pursuant to the act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia for Opening and Extending the Navigation of Patowmack River & pursuant to the act of the General Assembly of the State of Maryland for the same purpose, there was a general meeting of the Subscribers to the undertaking who proceeded to the Choice of a Chairman & elected Daniel Carroll Esq. to that office & appointed Charles Lee Esq. Clerk of the Meeting.

“The Book that has been opened for receiving subscriptions at the City of Richmond, at the Towns of Alexandria & Winchester in Virginia, & at the City of Annapolis, at George Town & Frederick Town in the State of Maryland being produced & examined the Subscriptions therein appeared to be as follows—

In Richmond Book, . . . . One hundred Shares,  
In Alexandria Book, . . . . One hundred thirty-five Shares,  
In Winchester Book, . . . . Thirty-one Shares,  
In Annapolis Book, . . . . Seventy-three Shares,  
In George Town Book, . . Forty-two Shares,  
In Frederick Town Book, . Twenty-two Shares,

Amounting in all to Four hundred and three Shares, which made a Capital of 40.300£ Sterling money.

“On a Motion made & seconded; *Resolved*—That the Subscribers present in person together with those present by Proxy proceed to the Choice of a President and Directors of the Patowmack Company & that the President & Directors



now to be chosen should continue in Office untill the first Monday in the Month of August which shall be in the year 1786.

*“Resolved—*That at every General Meeting in taking the votes of the Proprietors each Proprietor shall give in his vote or votes at the Clerk’s table in writing, and when the vote or votes shall be given by Proxy, that the name of each Constituent be also inserted.

*“Ordered—*That Chas. Simms and Jas. Keith be a Committee to examine the deputations to act & vote as Proxy & to make report thereof to this Meeting, who having made report accordingly—

*“Resolved—*That the deputations from Thos. Blackburn to Wm. Brown, from Thos. Johnson to Abraham Faw, and from Jno. Lynn to Abraham Faw, to act & vote for them respectively at this Meeting appearing to have been executed before One witness only, are Illegal & insufficient & that the said Blackburn Johnson & Lynn be not admitted to vote their respective Proxys aforesaid.—”

. . . . .  
*“The Proprietors present as well as such of the absent Proprietors as are represented by Proxys having given in their votes in manner before mentioned for the choice of a President & four Directors of the Patowmack Company, & the said votes being duly examined & accounted, a majority of votes was in favor of his Excellency, George Washington to be President & in favor of Thos. Johnson, Thos. Sim Lee, James Fitzgerald and George Gilpin to be Directors & thereupon his Excellency George Washington, Thos. Johnson, Thos. Sim Lee, James Fitzgerald and George Gilpin were declared by the Chairman to be elected President and Directors of the Patowmack Company.*

*“Ordered—*That the names of the Proprietors who were present in proper person, & also of those who voted & acted by Proxy at this meeting with the names of each Proxy respectively be inserted in the Minutes.”

. . . . .  
*“Present in proper person—*  
 His Excellency, George Washington



|                     |                    |                        |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Daniel Carroll,     | Robert Peter,      | Sam'l Davidson,        |
| Wm. Deakins, junr.  | Chas. Worthington, | Thos. Beall of George, |
| Henry Townsend,     | Jas. M. Ligan,     | Benj. Stoddert,        |
| Jno. Boucher,       | Bernard O'Neill,   | Lionel Bradstreet,     |
| Thos. C. Crampline, | Geo. Digges,       | Jas. Johnston,         |
| Abraham Faw,        | Horatio Gates,     | Peter Bruin,           |
| Edward Beeson,      | Edward Smith,      | Joseph Holmes,         |
| John Gunnell,       | Chas. Little,      | Roger West,            |
| Lund Washington,    | Wm. Hepburn,       | Henry Lyles,           |
| Wm. Lowry,          | Benj. Shrieve,     | John Harper,           |
| Wm. Scott,          | Dan'l McPherson,   | Wm. Brown,             |
| Wm. Hartshorne,     | Geo. Gilpin,       | Leven Powell,          |
| Chas. Simms,        | Robert Hooks,      | Wm. Ellzey,            |
| Sam'l L. Brown,     | Joseph Janney,     | Dan'l Roberdeau,       |
| John Allison,       | Baldwin Dade,      | Benj. Dulany,          |
| James Lawreson,     | James Keith,       | Alex. Henderson,       |
| David Stuart,       | Wm. Lyles,         | Jno. Potts, Junr.      |
| Wm. Herbert,        | Dennis Ramsay,     | Richard Conway,        |
| Jno. Fitzgerald,    | Chas. Lee.         |                        |

“Present by Proxy—

Jacquelin Ambler, Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Virginia, by His Excellency George Washington,  
Richard Harrison, Jas. W. Harrison, Thos. Lewis, Rob't. Mackey, Henry Ridgeley, Wm. Bates, Geo. Scott, James Rumsey by Peter B. Bruin;

Baker Johnson, Geo. Schertzell, Thos. Sim Lee, Joseph Chapline, Philip Thomas, Thos. Beatty, Joseph Sim, Jno. T. Amelung, Thos. Grant, Thos. Hawkins, Patrick L. Smith, by Abraham Faw;

Alex. White, Philip Pendleton, Wm. Drew, Moses Hunter, Wm. Brady, Wm. McKeward, James Campbell, Henry Bedinger, Geo. Scott, Geo. Hite, Walter Baker, Abraham Shepherd, Benj. Beisler, Cornelius Wyncoop by Horatio Gates.”

“Resolved—That the writings concerning the deputations to vote and act as Proxy be delivered together with the Subscribers voting and the Minutes of this Meeting to the President and Directors & that a General Meeting of the Patow-

mack Company be held at George Town on the first Monday in August next.

“(Signed)

“CHAS. LEE,

“*Clerk of the Meeting.*”

And thus the first incorporation of a company for the improvement of our inland water ways was accomplished; its successors have been many but none have ventured into unknown difficulties and perplexities with greater courage or higher motives; their aims were to benefit the remote settler, to safeguard the Union and incidentally, to place a remunerative investment. Washington and Johnson had been equally active in securing the charters from their respective states—Washington never lost his faith or interest in the project, Johnson’s activity seems to have ceased when he became commissioner of the District of Columbia, although he always maintained that his shares were of great value. This new company was the lineal successor of the powerful old Ohio Company; George Mason and others still treasured the stock of that unfortunate organization and vainly sought its recognition by the new. It will be noticed that very few of the subscribed shares were unrepresented at the initial meeting; among these were John Ballendine, Governors Paca and Harrison. Such a subscription list in such a time of financial stress and uncertainty is evidence of the great popular interest and confidence in the ultimate result.

On the 18th General Washington addressed the following note to Thos. Johnson and Thos. Sim Lee:

“*Gentlemen*;—At a meeting of the Subscribers to the Potowmack Navigation held yesterday agreeable to the Acts of Assembly of both States, a President and Directors were

chosen, the former I have accepted of, & you two in conjunction with George Gilpin & John Fitzgerald Esqrs. were appointed Directors, which I hope will be agreeable to you. As the season begins to advance I have thought necessary that we should have a meeting as soon as it can be with convenience, I have appointed Monday the 30th Inst. for that purpose. I have no doubt of your punctual attendance at that time. The place I leave to you to fix upon, & request your answer by return of the Express, which is sent on this special Business, You'll also please mention the Hour you would wish to meet on.

“I have the honor to be &c, G. WASHINGTON

“May 19th. '85. Since the letter which accompanies this was wrote by Genl. Washington I have found a private copy. (Mr. Buff of this town) who is to return immediately to this place, hence to save expense to the Company committed it to his care. If you find it necessary to send an express to Mr. Lee the expense shall be paid at the meeting.”<sup>9</sup>

At the first meeting of the directory there were many important questions to be decided; two long days were spent in almost continuous session in a private room of the old City Hotel. William Hartshorne, a prominent merchant and underwriter of Alexandria, was appointed treasurer with an allowance of 3 per cent., bonded at £10,000 sterling with two securities. John Potts, Jr., a member of a Pennsylvania family, was selected for “clerk to this Board, to be paid 21s. sterling for each day he shall attend, beside his reasonable expenses when he occasionally attends out of Alexandria and thereby incurs an extraordinary expense.” This attended to the gentlemen resolved:

“That it is the opinion of this Board that it is the most eligible to employ two sets of hands, one of them in opening and improving the navigation from Great Falls to Payne's Falls and the other from the upper part of Shenandoah Falls

<sup>9</sup> From original.

to the highest place practicable on the North Branch. That each sett consist of fifty men to be under the general direction of one skilful person who shall have a proper assistant, as well as three overseers with each party.

“Ordered that the Proprietors of the said Company pay into the hands of William Hartshorne, treasurer, on each share £5 ster. on or before July 15 and also the further sum of £2. 10 s ster. on or before October first next.”

Books were directed to be opened at Mr. Hartshorne's store for subscriptions for the 97 unsold shares. (It was not long before 87 of these were taken by three firms in Amsterdam, Holland, probably induced thereto by Louis Casanove, their American agent.) Ordered, advertisements to be inserted in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Alexandria papers for a skilful person to conduct the work from Great Falls upward—also for two assistants and overseers—also liberal wages with provisions and a reasonable quantity of spirits offered to not over one hundred good hands. Ordered, a letter to Capt. Abraham Shepherd, of Shepherd's Town, requesting him to contract for the building of two strong boats for the use of the company, to be 35 feet long 8 wide and not less than 20 inches deep, in the common manner of the flats used at the ferries on the Potowmack above tide water; also two other like boats to be contracted for by Col. Josias Clapham. A general view of the river with the superintendent was recommended to be made after the general meeting in August.

No applicants appearing on the first of July the meeting was adjourned until the 14th. The energetic Gilpin undertook to meet and employ laborers that should apply at Seneca and Shenandoah. It must be remembered that the work to be done required untried skill; no engineer in America had ever seen a canal

lock, few understood anything of the mechanical principles involved. There were no applicants for the superintendency on the 14th. After some deliberation it was resolved to proffer the position to James Rumsey, the most skilled mechanic in the two states, a man of genius, industrious and inventive, his pay to be £200 Virginia currency per year "inclusive of all expenses he may incur." Mr. Richardson Stewart was appointed assistant manager at a salary of £125 Virginia currency. The second assistant was not appointed, but his selection left to Mr. Rumsey. The rations for laborers were to be: one pound salt pork, or one and quarter pounds salt beef, or one and half fresh beef or mutton, one and half pounds flour or bread and three gills of rum per day.

After the general meeting in Georgetown, of which there is no record, the president and directors, accompanied by a number of shareholders, started on a tour of inspection of the river under the guidance of Rumsey.

"The object of this tour (up the Potomac) was to inspect minutely the course of the Potomac from Georgetown to Harper's Ferry, and ascertain in what places and to what extent it was necessary to construct canals and remove obstructions in the river. The directors went up by land, part of the distance on one side and part on the other; but they returned from Harper's Ferry to the head of Great Falls above Georgetown in boats; thus effecting a thorough examination of the river."

General Washington left the party at Seneca and—  
(from the *Diary*):

"August 5th. After breakfast, and after directing Mr. Rumsey, when he had marked the way and set the laborers at work, to meet us at Harper's Ferry, myself and the directors set out for the same place by way of Frederick Town in Maryland. Dined at a Dutchman's two miles above the mouth of



the Monocacy, and reached Frederick Town about five o'clock. Drank tea, supped, and lodged at Governor Johnson's. In the evening the bells rang and guns were fired; and a committee waited upon me by order of the gentlemen of the town to request, that I would stay the next day and partake of a public dinner, which the town were desirous of giving me. But as arrangements had been made, and the time for examining Shenandoah Falls, previously to the day fixed for receiving laborers into pay, was short, I found it most expedient to decline the honor."<sup>10</sup>

The full board met for a three days' session at Shenandoah Falls on the 8th of August and resolved: "That the President and all the directors having yesterday viewed and examined the Shenandoah Falls from the flat water above to that below were unanimously of opinion that the navigation may be carried through the falls without a lock and that the purposes of the incorporation would be best promoted by the speediest removal of obstructions within the above described space." The following letter was written to Mr. Rumsey, transcribed in the minutes and signed in duplicate by General Washington:

"*Sir*,—As you have attended the President and directors in their view and examination of the river from the upper part of the Seneca Falls to the Great Falls and from the flat water above to the flat water below the Shenandoah Falls you are possessed not only of their opinion of the course in general to be improved and their idea of the manner of effecting the work but also of their sentiments on many particular spots.—The President and directors have no doubt could they personally attend the work in its progress and see the river and those places in its different situations, they might in many instances depart from their present opinions.—The nature of the work and our situations make it therefore, necessary to leave it in your discretion to vary from what you may have

<sup>10</sup> See Ford, "Writings of Washington," Vol. 10, p. 487.



conceived our opinion to be as to the track or manner of executing the work. And we do it the more cheerfully as you seem to be equally impressed as ourselves with the importance of a straight navigation and the advantages of avoiding as far as well may be, cross currents. The opportunity you will have to watch the water at different heights and your industry in examining more minutely the different obstructions will enable you to exercise the discretionary power left with you to your own credit and satisfaction. You are already apprised of our change of resolution as to the place of working the upper party and the reasons which induced that change, and as effecting the navigation through the Shenandoah and Seneca Falls will be immediately advantageous to a great extent of country you are not to consider yourself restricted to the number of fifty hands for each party, but you are to employ as many as you have an opportunity to engage and you can work to advantage, so that the work may be expedited; but you must immediately on exceeding one hundred in the whole give information to the President least any disappointment should happen in the ready payment of the company's debts, which by all means is to be avoided.

“For the President and Directors

“(signed) G. WASHINGTON.”

. . . . .

Up to that time no public undertaking had ever aroused so much enthusiasm. When we consider the lean and impoverished condition of the gentry after the war it seems almost incredible that 403 shares, amounting to £40,300, should have been readily subscribed. It is worthy of note that John Ballendine's subscription was one of the first received in the Alexandria office. For forty years the work of this company occupied relatively the same position in the attention of the mechanical world as the Panama canal does in ours—but unfortunately a nation's plethoric purse

could not be called upon to remedy untoward conditions. The locks constructed at Great Falls were the engineering feat of the eighteenth century and were described in every scientific publication in the civilized world. This work was the culmination of Washington's hope for national expansion, for prosperity, for national unity and in its future he never lost his faith. To those of us who have considered this great and good man as an abstraction, a merely practical man of good hard sense and moral rectitude, the story of his connection with this enterprise will be a surprise, revealing him as a man of vivid imagination and unbounded enthusiasm; read this letter written to Lafayette in July, 1785:

"I wish to see the sons and daughters of the world in peace and busily employed in the more agreeable amusement of fulfilling the first and great commandment—'*Increase and multiply,*' as an encouragement to which we have opened the fertile plains of the Ohio to the poor, the needy and the oppressed of the Earth. Any one therefore who is heavy laden, or who wants land to cultivate, may repair thither and abound, as in the Land of Promise, with milk and honey, the ways are preparing, and the roads will be made easy, thro' the channels of Potomac and James rivers."

In letters addressed to David Humphreys and others in the same month he further emphasizes his fear of Spanish influence and his attitude on the question of opening the navigation of the Mississippi.

"I may be singular in my ideas, but they are these; that to open a door to, and make easy the way for those settlers to the westward (who ought to advance regularly and compactly) before we make any stir about the navigation of the Mississippi, and before our settlements are far advanced toward that river would be our true line of policy."

“TO EDMUND RANDOLPH,

“13 August, 1785.

“*Dear Sir,*

“ . . . The great object, for the accomplishment of which I wish to see the inland navigation of the Rivers James & Potomack improved & extended, is to connect the Western Territory with the Atlantic States; all others with me are secondary.”

“TO RICHARD HENRY LEE,

“22d August, 1785.

“ . . . However singular the opinion may be, I cannot divest myself of it, that the navigation of the Mississippi, *at this time*, ought to be no object with us. On the contrary, until we have a little time allowed to open and make easy the ways between the Atlantic States and the western territory, the obstruction had better remain. There is nothing which binds one county or one State to another, but interest. Without this cement the western inhabitants who more than probably will be composed in a great degree of foreigners, can have no predilection for us, and a commercial connection is the only tie we can have.”

In the intervals of attending board meetings and inspecting critical points in the river, General Washington wrote many eloquent letters to influential public men as well as friends on the engrossing topic—the summer and fall were very fully employed. Many guests also were to be entertained; Mr. Hunter, an English traveler, has left a pleasant account of his visit:

“At three the dinner was on the table and we were shown by the General into another room, where everything was set off with a peculiar taste, and at the same time very neat and plain. The General sent the bottle about pretty freely after dinner and gave success to the Navigation of the Potomac for his toast, which he has very much at heart, and when finished will I suppose be the first river in the world. He never under-

takes anything without having first well considered of it, and consulted different people, but when ever he has begun anything, no obstacle or difficulty can come in his way but what he is determined to surmount. The General's character seems to be a prudent but a very persevering one.

"He is quite pleased at the idea of the Baltimore merchants laughing at him and saying it was a ridiculous plan and would never succeed. 'They begin now,' says the General, 'to look a little serious about the matter, as they know it must hurt their commerce amazingly.'"<sup>11</sup>

The directory of the James River project through Edmund Randolph tendered the presidency of their company to General Washington, who in the following letter declined the additional responsibility:

"16 Sept. 1785.

"... I feel very sensibly, the honor and confidence which has been reposed in me by the James river company; and regret it will not be in my power to discharge the duties of President of the Board of Directors, with that punctuality and attention which the trust requires.—Every service however that I can render, compatible with my other avocations, shall be afforded with pleasure, and I am happy in being associated in the business with gentlemen so competent to the purposes of their appointment—and from what I have heard of the navigation, and seen of the Falls, I think your work may be soon and easily accomplished—and that it will be of great public utility, as well as private emolument to the subscribers when done;—for the advantage of both, tho' I believe the business lies in another line, I would earnestly recommend it to you to press the execution of the survey between James river and the navigable waters of the Kanhawa, and a proper investigation of the latter. It will be a source of great commerce with the capitol and in my opinion will be productive of great political consequences to this country;—the business of a similar nature, as it respects this river, is at an entire stand.—Mr.

<sup>11</sup> See *W. Va. Historical Mag.*, Vol. 1, p. 60.

Massey who was first appointed on the part of this State, having declined acting; the Maryland Commissioner knows of no other in his room, and is unable, tho' ready to proceed.

“Besides what appears in the minutes, which are enclosed, it is in contemplation by the Board of Directors of the Navigation of this river, to endeavor to hire a number of slaves next year as labourers thereon,—and as the Great Falls are tremendous, and the navigation thereof, in whatever manner it is attempted will require much skill and practical knowledge in the execution; we propose, before this is undertaken, to invite a proper person from Europe, who has been employed in works of this kind, as a superintendant of it; With respect to the other parts of the river, tho' what are called the Shenandoah Falls are as difficult in my opinion as the Falls of James river at Westham, we seem to have confidence enough in ourselves to undertake them; and mean to do so without having recourse to either canals or Locks.—Thro' all the Falls and rapids *above the Great Falls*, we mean to attempt nothing more than to open a strait passage to avoid, as much as possible, currents;—giving sufficient depth, and as much smoothness as may be to the surface;—and if Rumsey's project fails (of which he has not the smallest apprehension) to pull the Boats up by chains floated by buoys;—the latter, when Ice begins to form, may be slipped and thereby saved; whilst the former rivoted to rocks at bottom, may remain during the intemperate season undisturbed and without injury.

“Upon an estimate of the expence of those chains and Buoys, we (that is, the Directors of the Potomac navigation and myself) are of opinion, without having an eye to the probable advantages which are expected to be derived from Rumsey's mechanical discovery, than it will be infinitely less than what must arise from cutting canals, building Locks, making track paths, &c., as was the design of Balendine and others; and will have this advantage over them, that when once done, that is when the passage is opened in a straight direction in the natural bed of the river, it is done as it were forever, whereas canals and Locks, beside the natural decay of them, are exposed to much injury from Ice, drift wood, and



even the common freshes; in a word, are never safe where there are such sudden inundations and violent torrents, as the rivers in this country are subject to." Etc.

Johnson and Lee seldom attended directory meetings held at Alexandria but seem to have given their personal attention to the work about Shenandoah and Seneca. In September Johnson wrote General Washington from Frederick:

"*Sir*, I received your letter of the 10th Inst. five days after its Date and the next day had an Opportunity of showing it to Mr. Lee he had very lately been to see Mr. Rumsey and was Spectator of several successful Blasts.

"Rumsey had discharged several disorderly Fellows and had but one left that he was any way desirous of getting rid of he had then about seventy hands Mr. Lee says the Men seemed to work with Spirit and the Difficulties appear less in the progress of the Work than were expected it seems they only want more Strength.

"We both think it desirable to have Negroes as well as purchase Servants but imagine very few can be got in this State perhaps indeed they cannot be removed from hence on the Virginia side of the Great Falls with propriety we think your supply must be altogether from Virginia and we are altogether unacquainted with the common Terms we both must and are willing to submit this Point to yourself and the other Gent. as you are so much better informed than we are we think their labour will be more valuable than that of common white Hirelings As to the number there's no other check as we can see but Employment for them in Winter Your and the other Gents View of the Great Falls will have enabled you to correct my Guesses if we go on Imagine we might find Employment for 100 Hands perhaps more Amongst the Servants I think it would be well to have four Smiths some Carpenters and a Wheelwright or two As the Season is fast approaching in which we must resolve whether to do any Thing this Winter or not I had determined to meet you at Seneca today and to



have gone with you to the Great Falls Tomorrow but last Night I recd. a pressing message to go to Annapolis I therefore gave up so much of my Design as to seeing the Great Falls and a very rainy Day prevents my meeting you at Seneca to remedy it as far as my Situation will allow though I would prefer half an Hours Conversation on the Subject to all I can write in a Day I have amused myself with writing my Ideas on the Canal and Locks in detail and making Calculations of the Expence which indeed surprises me for its smallness in the Amount though I do not see where to add to bring it nearer my former Conjectures I enclose them to you my intention must be their Recommendation I propose to myself the pleasure of seeing you before long

“The Butcher who was to have supplied Mr. Stewarts party would not enter into the Contract on my return without being ascertained there should be 50 Rations issued I told him there was a probability of more instead of less and prevailed on him to take a letter from me to Mr. Stewart he set off with it but came back without going near Mr. Stewart or coming to me on his Return I was unwell and knew nothing of this Behr. for a Week or ten days afterwards.

“I fear Mr. Stewart has been equally disappointed about Boats Colo. Clapham has been ill and as has been common with us this Season has had a great proportion of his people sick he has been obliged to take his own people out of his Crops for he could not hire Hands I dare say he is as much chagrined at the Delay as Mr. Stewart for no Body is more friendly to the Success of the Work than he is.” Etc.<sup>12</sup>

Free white labor of the time was unskilful and unreliable, the management at once perceived that recourse must be had to slaves. A large number of redemptioners or indentured servants were purchased from European ships landing in Philadelphia and Baltimore. These were classed at the works as “Red Boys,” “Blue Boys,” etc., according to their ships. Irish servants appear to have given the superintendents

<sup>12</sup> From original.

very much annoyance, to judge from the press of the day. In the *Maryland Chronicle* of the 22d February, 1786, we find this:

“From the *Alexandria Gazette* of the 1st. January we hear that several servants who had been purchased to work on the Potowmack Navigation lately ran away, but being soon after apprehended, were sentenced to have their heads & eyebrows shaved, which operation was immediately executed, and is to be continued every week during the time of their servitude, or until their behaviour evinces that they are brought to a sense of their duty. This notice, it is expected, will sufficiently apprise the country should they again make a similar attempt.”

James Rumsey also on June 21, 1786, advertises from Great Falls:

“These indented Irish servants, Wm. Fee (shaved,) James Nevin, Francis Cacy, Arthur Mullin, (shaved) Thos. Moore, James Munnay, Hugh Taylor, Rob’t Meighan, Taylor took a variety of clothes with him, among them a super fine green cloth coat with bright buttons. £60 reward for all or £10 for each.”

July 10th:

“Four more Irish servants & a woman belonging to a neighboring planter, claims to have married Taylor, she wore a crimson frieze clothe cloak, a blue petticoat & a white furred hat, (all stolen,) £100 reward for all or £20 for each.”

As in modern times real estate values along the river were enhanced. One John Cannell laid off a town on the west side of Seneca on the river in Montgomery County and advertised it as “the most advantageous place for erecting a town, for benefit of the coming navigation.”

On the 18th of October there was a two days’ session of the full board at Great Falls. The question of labor was most perplexing, the indentured servants were

quite as unreliable as the hired men; it was resolved to hire negro slaves for £20 Virginia currency per annum with comfortable clothing and substantial rations; so henceforth there were three classes of laborers employed, with the usual clashes between them. On the new year hands were working at Shenandoah, Seneca and Great Falls, at the last place building huts for the men and digging the canal. Rumsey was instructed to order as many boats as would be needed for work in the bed of the river. This ingenious young man seems to have put aside his schemes for utilizing steam in navigation and to have devoted all his energies to the service of his employers—for a time at least. He wrote almost daily reports to the treasurer, Mr. Harts-horne; this will serve as a specimen:

“Great Falls potowmack July 3d 1786. Sir We have Been much Imposed upon the last Two weeks in the powder way (we had our Blowers, One Run off the other Blown up) we therefore was Obligated to have two new hands put to Blowing and there was much attention gave to them least Axedents should happen yet they used the powder Rather too Extrava-gant, But that was not all they have certainly stolen a Con-siderable Quantity as we have not more by us than will last until tomorrow noon. Our hole troop is Such Villians that we must for the future give the powder into Charge of a person appointed for that purpose to measure it to them on the ground by a Charger.—I hope you will have it in your power to send us powder here Immediately (if Left at Mr. Shep-herds we can get it.) I am just finishing some houses at Bath for which I want foure Boxes of window glass 8 by 10 if you will be kind enough to furnish it, and Deliver it to the Bearer of this letter Mr. Mordacai Throckmorton he will send it up for me, and I will Settle with you for it, as well as all other of my accounts, the next time I Come to town, I am with esteem your friend and serv’t James Rumsey

“P. S. please to send 1lb of Salt Petre with the powder, we think we Can make matches with it that will Save powder.”

At a three days' session at Great Falls in March, 1786, Rumsey was directed to give his personal attention to the point where the largest force was employed and James Smith was appointed an assistant manager. A call was made for 10£ ster. on each share.

"And upon a view and examination of the different tracks proposed to carry the canal in, it was unanimously determined that the one last examined between the river and the Falls Island is the most eligible and that it be taken in that course."

In August the general meeting of the proprietors of the Potowmack Company was held in Alexandria and was very largely attended. General Washington read the first annual report of the president and directors, which autograph report has been preserved and is herewith represented.

"ANNUAL REPORT, AUGUST, 1786.

"The President and directors of the Potomac Company beg leave to report that they have called for four dividends on the several subscriptions as follows; the first of 5%, the second of 2%, the third of 10%, the fourth of 10%. Amounting in the whole to Twelve thousand, four hundred and thirty pounds sterling, of which there has been paid, five thousand nine hundred & forty pounds sterling. The several expenditures will appear by the Treasurer's account, who has in hand one thousand six hundred thirty six pounds 13s 2. Virginia Currency equal to One thousand Two hundred Twenty seven pounds 10s 2 sterling.—

"With respect to the business we beg leave to refer to the Secretary's Books which contain all our orders relating thereto.

"In consequence of these orders the Work has been carried on at the Seneca and Shenandoah Falls while the waters were low enough to admit of it. After the river rose too high, the hands were removed to the Great Falls, where a considerable progress has been made in cutting a canal and the most of the

The President and Directors of the Patowmack Company beg leave to report that they have called for forty dividends on the several subscriptions as follows. the 1<sup>st</sup> of 5<sup>pts</sup>

2 - - 2 - -

3 - - 10 - -

4 - - 10 - -

Amounting in the whole to Twelve thousand four Hundred & thirty five Pounds Sterling, of which there has been paid, Two thousand & nine hundred & forty pounds Sterling. The several expenditures will appear by the Treasurers account, who has in hand One thousand six Hundred thirty six pounds 13/7 Virginia Currency equal to One thousand Two hundred Twenty seven pounds 10/2 Sterling -

With respect to the business we beg leave to refer to the several Books which contain of all our orders relating thereto.

In consequence of these orders the Work has been carried on at the Seneca and Shanandoah Falls while the waters were low enough to admit of it - after the River rose too high, the hands were removed to the Great Falls, where a considerable progress has been made in cutting a Canal, and the most of the men are still employed on account of the uncommon wet Season -

~~On the day appointed by law for electing a President and Directors the subscribers will please attend and vote for such as they approve.~~

We beg leave to remind the subscribers that this is the day appointed by law for electing a President & Directors for the ensuing year -

Alexandria Aug 7. 1786

In behalf of the Directors

Edw. Walpole P.





men are still employed on account of the uncommon wet Season.

(Erasure of two lines.)

“We beg leave to remind the Subscribers that this is the day appointed by law for electing a President & Directors for the ensuing year.

“In behalf of the Directors,

“G. WASHINGTON P.

“ALEXANDRIA, Aug. 7th. 1786”

The committee appointed to report on the proceedings of the Directors thus reported;—

“In obedience to an order of the General meeting of the Proprietors of the Potowmack Company at Alexandria Augt, 7th 1786 we your committee beg leave to report that, we have carefully examined the account of the President and Directors and find the monies credited for dividends received, and charges made for expenditures and disbursements, to be fairly and justly stated. That we have perused their book of proceedings and orders, from which it appears to us, they have directed and managed the Company’s business with great attention and ability.

“That it is our opinion the President and Directors ought to be allowed out of the Company’s money for their expenses in going to, attending and returning from their different meetings as follows; viz.—General Washington, thirty four pounds, ten shillings, Thomas Johnson, Esq. thirty pounds, Thomas Sim Lee Esq. twenty two pounds ten shillings, John Fitzgerald Esq. Thirty four pounds, ten shillings, George Gilpin Esq. thirty four pounds ten shillings, it being in proportion to the time each has attended at thirty shillings, Virginia currency, per day. All of which is submitted to the Meeting.

“Signed. R. HOOE

JOHN THOMAS BOUCHER

WM. LYLES’<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> From the *Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*, Thursday, Aug. 17, 1786. “On Monday last, agreeable to law, a general meeting of the Potowmack Company was held at Mr. Wise’s Tavern, when an

Of these earnest and interested gentlemen of the directory George Gilpin was the most untiring. For twelve years he was indefatigable in his service to the company; the work at Shenandoah, Seneca, Great and Little Falls he constantly supervised, even undertaking the construction of the great locks in the absence of a competent engineer. He familiarized himself with every point in the river from Cumberland to tide water. The journeys to these widely separated places were of course always made on horseback.

Probably the first man to pay serious attention to the improvement of our inland water ways as a means of communication with the west was the shrewd and speculative Robert Morris. He organized a company for uniting the Schuylkill with the Susquehanna by means of a canal and brought a number of consulting engineers from England before actually commencing any work. One of these General Washington entertained while he was on his way to advise with the promoters of the James River scheme and he insisted upon securing his expert advice in this letter to the other members of the board resident in Alexandria.<sup>14</sup>

account of the proceedings of the President and Directors was laid before the Company and received with infinite satisfaction. From this it appears that the great national work which forms the object of the Company is prosecuted with an industry and order truly characteristic of the illustrious President and highly honorable to the Directors; and there is fullest room to expect an entire success of their undertaking. The friends to American commerce and American happiness will no doubt feel much pleasure in contemplating the probable success of the work which, while it contributes to the Aggrandizement of the one, will serve as a lasting monument of the amity and sisterly love with which two states can concur in promoting the second. The Company after re-electing their officers for the last year and unanimously decreeing a vote of thanks to them for their past attention, fixed on George Town as the place of holding the next annual meeting."

<sup>14</sup>James Brindley, the first of the great English canal engineers of the eighteenth century was an enthusiast on the subject of slack water

“MT. VERNON, 31st. March, 1786.

“TO. COL. GILPIN AND FITZGERALD.

“*Gentn.,*

“Yesterday Mr. Brindley, in company with a Mr. Harris, Manager for the James river Company, left this on their way to Richmond from whence Mr. Brindley expects to be returned, as far as Alexandria, in seven days from the date hereof. I have engaged him to call upon Colo. Gilpin on his rout back.

“Mr. Brindley and Mr. Harris took the great Falls in their way down and both approve of the present line for our Canal—the first very much. He conceives that 9-10ths of the expence of the one fifth proposed will be saved by this cut, the work altogether as secure, and the entrance into the river by no means unfavorable. He thinks however that a good deal of attention and judgment is required in fixing locks there; the height of which he observes is always governed by the ground—they frequently run from four to eighteen feet, and sometimes as high as twenty-four. The nature and declination of the ground, according to him, is alone to direct—and where this will admit he thinks the larger the Locks are made the better, because more convenient.

“With respect to this part of the business I feel, and always have confessed an entire incompetency:—nor do I conceive that theoretical knowledge alone is adequate to the undertaking. Locks, upon the most judicious plan, will certainly be expensive; and if not properly constructed and judiciously placed, may be altogether useless. It is for these reasons therefore that I have frequently suggested (though no decision has been had) the propriety of employing a professional man.

“Nevertheless whether the expense of obtaining one in, and bringing him from Europe has been thought unnecessary, or too burthensome for the advantages, which are to be expected, I know not; but as it is said no person in this country has *more* practical knowledge than Mr. Brindley, I submit to your consideration the propriety of engaging him to take the Falls canals; when jocularly asked once what he supposed was the mission of rivers, or for what they were created, replied, “to feed navigable canals of course.” The Brindley mentioned in the text was his son, also a noted canal engineer.

in his way back; to examine, level and digest a plan for Locks at that place; if it shall appear good, and his reasons in support of the spots and sizes conclusive it will justify the adoption; if palpably erroneous, there is no obligation upon us to follow him, and the expence in that case is the only evil which can result from it—this for the chance of a probable good, I am not only willing but desirous of encountering; and if Colo. Gilpin has not already made the trip to that place which he proposed at our last visit, and disappointment there, it would give me great pleasure if it could be so timed as to accompany Mr. Brindley; this would not only give countenance to the measure, but aid also, and might serve to remove the little jealousies which otherwise arise in the minds of our own managers. Taking Mr. Brindley to the works *now* may ultimately save expence—at the same time having a plan before us, enable us at all convenient times to provide materials for its execution.

“I am etc. etc.

“P. S. If my proposition is acceded to, it would be better to fix at once what Mr. Brindley is to receive, and I will readily subscribe my name to what you two gentlemen shall agree to give him.”

The years of 1785–6 were remarkable for the extraordinary amount of the rainfall; on several occasions the great forty-foot rock that towers above the flood at Great Falls was submerged. Of course under such conditions work in the bed of the stream was impossible and very little progress was made. It became necessary to ask an extension of time from the legislatures. So on the 2d of October, 1786, a petition was addressed to the legislatures:

“For an extension of the three years’ time allowed for the work between Great Falls and Cumberland to November 1790 or such other time as your Honors shall deem reasonable for making and improving the Navigation between Great Falls and Fort Cumberland, reciting that the Company have en-

tered on the work within the time limited & prosecuted the same at great expense with unremitted assiduity with such prospect of success that they hope and expect to complete the whole navigation within the ten years allowed, but that the latter part of the summer and the fall of 1785 were so unfavorable that the hands employed in the bed of the river above the Great Falls were often drove from their work by rises of the waters and frequently kept out for several days together so that the work could not proceed as was wished and expected. And the last summer hath proved so very rainy that the water has constantly kept up too high to permit any work to be done in the bed of the river though the Company retained a considerable number of men in their service through the whole of the last winter with the view of being prepared to enter on the work about the 20th. June, the time that the water is commonly low enough for such purposes and thus by extraordinary exertion to retrieve the unavoidable loss of time in the preceding year. (Signed) G. WASHINGTON."

By the various rolls of the overseers it is seen that over two hundred men had been employed during the summer of 1786.

Mr. James Rumsey had grievances against Mr. Richardson, assistant manager, and brought charges against him under ten heads: incapacity, want of truth and candor, disobedience of his orders, misrepresentations to the board, interfering with overseer's men, telling them it was to keep up his dignity, appointing improper persons overseers, cruelty to servants, refusing to permit officers of court to serve any process upon his men, thus permitting them to terrorize the country people, stirring up strife against Rumsey, prejudicing neighboring people against company so that wagoners dare not deliver goods to the works, etc. To which the board replied:

"Having heard the charges . . . and the testimony adduced in support thereof and having maturely considered the same



are of opinion;—1st.—previous to the first application they took the measures they thought most likely to give them an opportunity of employing managers who had experience in works of the nature of that in contemplation, but as no person offered who had practical knowledge in such business, Mr. Rumsey was appointed and continued as principal till his resignation (in July) in which event the Board under all circumstances advanced the present to the place of the late manager without any endeavors on the part of Mr. Stewart to impress on the Board an idea of his competency to the work and in general he has not fallen short of their expectations in its progress.”

The charges were taken up in detail but not proven. The board deplored the impossibility of securing laborers of good morals.

The two legislatures promptly acted upon the petition for extension of time and passed the acts in November.

Financial troubles now began to threaten in earnest. The low condition of national affairs affected everything, capitalists became very timid, many assessments were not paid, the spirit of enthusiasm was becoming faint. Notices were sent delinquents in 1787 threatening sales of delinquent shares, a few subscribers responded, but fifty-five were advertised for public sale in Alexandria and Georgetown. No bidders appearing, the sales were twice postponed. Some satisfactory arrangements seem to have been made with many of these holders. Another assessment of six per cent. was called.

At the proper date for the annual meeting of the shareholders in August General Washington was in Philadelphia attending the Constitutional Convention, the meeting was held at Alexandria in November when the president made the following report:



“SECOND ANNUAL REPORT.

“The President & Directors of the Potowmack Company beg leave to report that they have call'd for one Dividend of six p. cent since their communication of August 7th, 1786, of which a small part only, has been received, & there are still considerable Ballances due of the sums previously call'd for, the particulars of which being too tedious for this report, will appear by reference to the Books of the Treasurer.

“The several Expenditures have appeared by the amts. this day laid before you by which a Ballance of 64. 8s is due the treasurer.

“For the several orders in conducting the Business entrusted to our care we beg leave to refer you to the books of the Secretary—in consequence of which the work has been carried on at the Great Falls where the Canal is extended down to the place at which the Locks must begin, the whole of which Canal is nearly completed—One of the most difficult passes also, between the Great Falls & Seneca is open'd & a good Towpath made. The River continued high throughout the summer & fall of 1786 which greatly retarded the operations intended. A part of the Hands were sent to Seneca in July last, & hopes were entertained from the report of Mr. Smith, that the River would be pass'd by loaded Boats on the approaching Spring, but the bad state of Health experienced by the people there will prevent its being effected as soon as was reasonably supposed.

“At Shenandoah the work has been carried on at the most difficult & Expensive part, which promises the success wished for, although in appearance so much has not been done as if the Hands had been employed on the more easy parts.

“It appears to us by the Books of the Treasurer, which you have before you, that the sums paid into his hands since our last report amount to Four Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty nine Pounds Sixteen Shillings & four pence Sterling which added to the former sum received makes Ten Thousand Seven Hundred & twenty nine Pounds Sixteen shillings & four pence Sterling in which are to be considered the Servants,

Utensils &c. on hand belonging to the Company agreeable to the Lists herewith submitted to you.

"In behalf of the Directors

"ALEXANDRIA

"(signed) G<sup>o</sup>. WASHINGTON, P"

"Novr. 8th 1787"

Acts were secured from the legislatures in November, 1787, giving a more speedy remedy against delinquent subscribers. Work continued at Shenandoah, Seneca and Great Falls. Of the board meetings few records were kept, as Mr. Potts had removed to Philadelphia for a time. At the meeting at Shenandoah in June, 1788, Mr. Hartshorne was requested to serve until a proper person could be secured to act as clerk. At this meeting the board resolved to employ only one manager and Mr. Smith was retained. This remarkable letter was addressed to Mr. Richardson:

"We met today by appointment to hear the charges against you but could not with propriety go into an examination of witnesses in your absence, which however to be regretted we believe is involuntary. On a general view of the situation of the Company's affairs being of the opinion that the present funds or prospects will not warrant our continuing two managers we have come to the inclosed resolution. It is with reluctance we found ourselves under the necessity to make an arrangement which at this point of time may possibly be thought by your enemies to be occasioned by the charges against you, but it has proceeded solely from our duty and inclination to promote the Company's interest without being influenced in any degree by facts alleged and not examined into. The preference given to Mr. Smith is on different principles and we expect cannot surprise you or hurt your feelings. We request on the expiration of your present year you will deliver up the property of the Company under your care to his hands.

"(Signed) G. WASHINGTON, P

THOS. JOHNSON

T. S. LEE

GEO. GILPIN."

The board, "being of opinion that the work at the Great Falls, Seneca and Shenandoah, being so far perfected in the approaching season as to permit the passage of loaded boats in favorable seasons, is an object highly interesting to the company and the public, recommend the most vigorous efforts for that purpose, and that with that view the force now at the Seneca and Great Falls be employed there till the water be low in July and after leaving a sufficient number to go on with the work at those places that the rest be removed to the Shenandoah and that the force be increased as the occasion may require and opportunity will serve." The board allowed Mr. Smith, manager, £25 annually to indemnify him for expenses he may incur by the visits of the president and directors and strangers travelling and other personal expenses to avoid the trouble of keeping minute accounts.

General Washington submitted the annual report of 1788, but no record of the general meeting has been kept.

#### "THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

"The President & Directors of the Potomack Company beg leave to report that, since the general meeting of last year by which they were instructed to petition the Legislatures of the two States to pass an Act obliging the delinquent Subscribers to pay their respective quotas in a more summary way than by the common course of Law, they now have the pleasure to inform the Company that such Laws have been obtained which they expect will be competent to the intention, although the good Effects of them have not been as yet very productive.

"Since the call of six p. cent laid before the last meeting we have been under the necessity, from the Delinquency of the Subscribers, to call for six and one half p. cent more which in the whole makes 40 p. cent on each share subscribed.

"For the several orders in conducting the business entrusted to our care we beg leave to refer you to the Secretary's Books.

The unusual height of the Waters this Spring & Summer have greatly retarded our Operations on the River but should the Weather become more favorable we have reason to believe that a partial though not a perfect Navigation may be effected this fall & winter from Fort Cumberland to the Great Falls—at which place the Canal is nearly completed. Our principal force has been applied to the Shenandoah & Seneca Falls, which considering the number of hands & the unfavorable Season are in as great forwardness as we could expect.

“It appears to us by the Books of the Treasurer which you have had before you that the sums paid into his hands since last year’s report amount to £2990, 2/2 Sterling which added to the former sum received makes Thirteen Thousand Seven Hundred & Nineteen Pounds Eighteen Shillings & Sixpence Sterling in which are to be considered the servants utensils &c. on hand belonging to the Company agreeably to the lists herewith submitted to you.

“G. WASHINGTON P.

“ALEXANDRIA 4th August  
1788”

At a meeting in George Town in September, 1789, Thomas Johnson qualified as president, George Gilpin, Jas. Fitzgerald and Notley Young as directors. It was then ordered that the subscribers should pay £5 on each share on or before November 15. It was also ordered that the treasurer take the most effectual legal measures to compel a speedy payment of all monies remaining unpaid on the several calls preceding this last special call. This order was repeated in April of the next year, and in September it was ordered that ten per cent. be immediately called for on each share in the company and the same is ordered to be paid to the treasurer on or before November, 1790. At the same time either director was authorized to employ hands to work on the river between Williamsport and Cumberland. In October the president and directors found

themselves obliged to take condemnation proceedings of land and water power at Great Falls, having been unable to make terms with Henry Lee, owner of the land. This was carried into effect in 1792. About the same time Edward McCarty was paid £150 Maryland currency for completing the navigation from the upper part of the Ohio Bottom, or lot No. 5, to the still water below Thos. Dameron's by carrying the water by a cut of thirty feet wide.

An order signed by Geo. Gilpin, David Stuart and Wm. Deakins, jr., directed Messrs. Gant and Fitzhugh to take proper steps for the condemnation of lands through which the canal at Little Falls passes.

An agreement was made with Colonel Thurston, of Frederick Co., Virginia, to commence the business of clearing obstacles from the Shenandoah River. This was done, it seems, to comply with the terms of an act of the Virginia legislature requiring work to be commenced on the Potomac tributaries at once. Thus the Patowmack Company entered upon the most stormy period of its history. The same act permitted aliens to become stockholders in the company and a large block of stock was sold to merchants in Amsterdam in Holland.

With an advertisement for 200 slaves came the call for another ten per cent. on each share, and the contract was given for four locks at Little Falls.

At the general annual meeting in 1792 the following report was read:

“1792. Gentlemen, The president and directors of the Potomac Company beg leave to make the following report respecting the state of the treasury and the situation and progress of the works on the various parts of the river.

“From the treasurer's books it appears that the sum of money expended is £32,971 Virginia currency; the sums due



from delinquent subscribers £6543; cash in the hands of the treasurer amounts to £4775. for particulars on this head you will herewith receive an extract from the treasurer's books.

"Since our report delivered at the meeting in August last, the passage between the Seneca and the Great Falls has been made safe and easy by making it straight in many places, removing rocks and throwing up dams to collect and deepen the water where ever it was necessary.

"The navigation at Hook's Fall has been made perfectly safe, by making the passage straight along the Virginia shore.

"A canal at the Little Falls is cut on the Maryland side of the river nearly the whole distance necessary, and in general to the full depth, the stone is swept out and a wall built for nearly a mile; the digging for the lock seats is let out for a specific sum and the work commenced. As the number of hands intended to be employed at this place could not be procured and those that were got being sickly the work has not been carried on with that expedition we wished and intended, but have every reason to expect it will be nearly, if not quite, completed this fall and winter.

"We farther report that Captain Thomas Beall of Fort Cumberland has undertaken to complete the navigation from that place to Gregg's Mill according to law for a certain sum. Mr. Denton Jaques has engaged to employ hands and clear a small rapid near Fort Frederick called Garrison Falls. Captain Henry is now employed in clearing the Shepardstown Falls, all of which we will have finished with the greatest dispatch in our power.

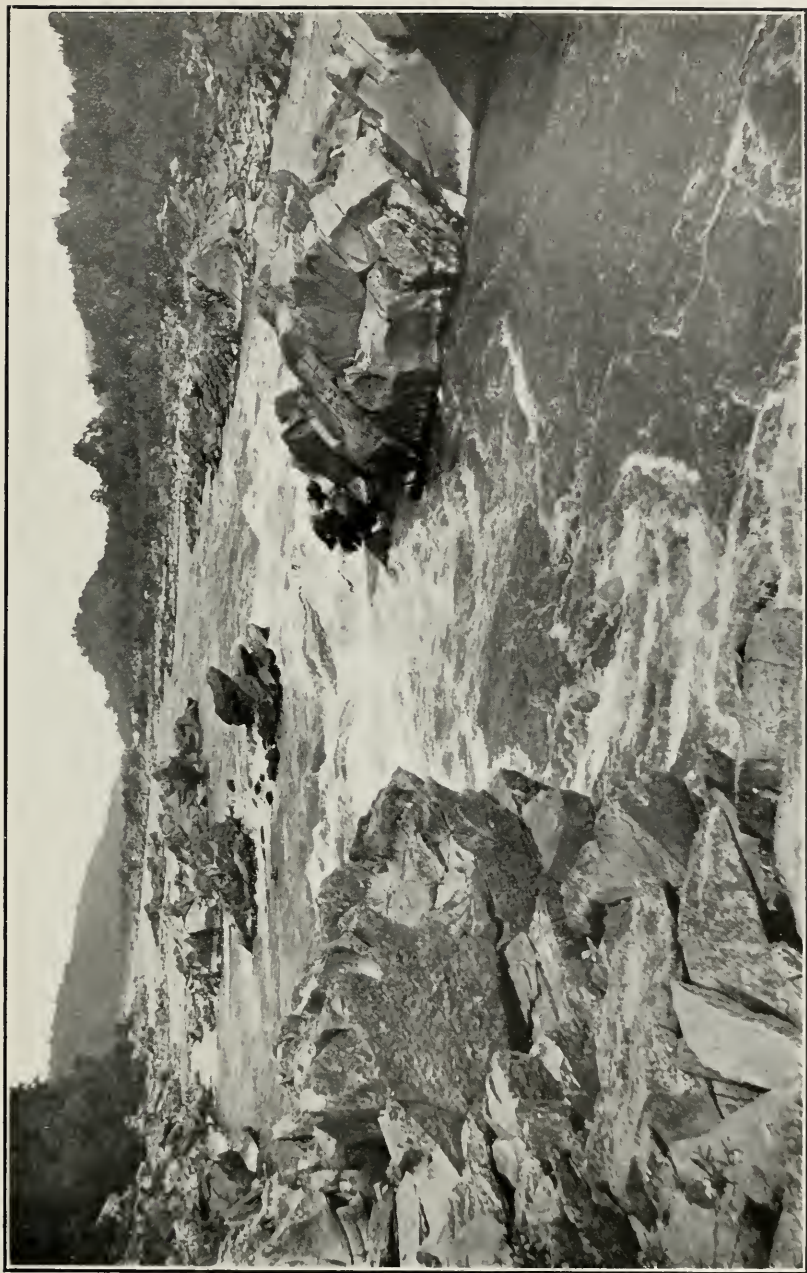
"We are gentlemen, Your obedient servants.

"Signed, JOHN FITZGERALD, GEORGE GILPIN, DD. STUART."

The report is in the handwriting of Thos. Johnson, president, but he neglected to sign it. The business-like tone is quite different from any other of the annual reports that have been preserved.

At the general meeting in 1793 James Fitzgerald was





LITTLE FALLS OF THE POTOMAC—ENTRANCE TO THE OLD CANAL AT EXTREME RIGHT

(Photograph by Mr. B. G. Foster)



elected president, Geo. Gilpin, Wm. Deakins, Jr., James Keith and Thos. Beall of George, directors. On account of excellent work the pay of the three managers was increased £6 Virginia currency per month. The treasurer was ordered to advertise delinquent shares for sale "but not to express the names of their proprietors, only the number of shares in each State and that he do by a special messenger inform the several persons whose shares are intended for sale." In this list of 44 we find the names of James Rumsey, Francis Key, Henry Lyles, Warner Washington, two Jenifers, James Syme and Henry Lee.

The Virginia legislature permitted the trustees to lay off a town at Great Falls to be called Matildaville from which great things were expected. It cannot now be accurately located but the name lingered on Virginia maps for fifty years. In 1793 Lee and the directory came to terms, the legal proceedings were dismissed and the secretary adds "never again resorted to." Hartshorne and Potts were the witnesses of the transaction. The latter erected a fine forge at Matildaville, which, with the sawmill and grist mill, made quite a manufacturing center. Beside these the company had erected an imposing residence for the superintendent (the ruins are still in evidence); there were also store-houses and boarding houses.

Financial difficulties beset these worthy gentlemen, the directors, so unaccustomed to the management of large enterprises; when the receipts came in from their urgent calls expenses were lavish, when these were exhausted the works were idle and only those absolutely required to care for their properties were retained in service. In January, 1794, they found themselves under the necessity of appealing to the banks for assistance until further collections could be made.

Another extension of two years' time was secured from the legislatures.

One hundred shares were added to the capital stock; of these the state of Maryland took forty and individuals sixty. Calls were made for twelve per cent. and £10 on each share of the new stock. Work was now pushed on all parts of the river. Tobias Lear<sup>15</sup> and John Templeton became directors. Through Lear's advice, probably, the following resolution was passed:

"That the president on behalf of the Company apply to the president and manager of the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Canal Company for their permission to Mr. Weston to come down to the Great Falls of the Potomac to examine the works constructing there and give his opinion thereupon and that he do at the same time apply to Mr. Weston and make him acquainted with the application and request his compliance in case he can be spared."

Which indicates that Mr. Morris was proceeding with his scheme, and the hesitancy with which the directory undertook the task at Great Falls.

Under date of 12 December, 1794, President Washington wrote Lear:

"For many very important reasons (unnecessary to enumerate to you) the navigation of that river ought to be pushed forward with all the celerity which the nature of the work will admit. Viewing the matter as I do I shall not neglect any fair opportunity of facilitating a visit from Mr. Weston to that quarter, but (under the rose I must say it) however fair the assurances of his going thither may be, you may take it for granted that from motives of jealousy there is a counter tide to that measure; and I wish you may not find something similar to it in another quarter, if the operations on the

<sup>15</sup> "Anon. Observations on the River Potowmack and the Country Contiguous, &c," N. Y., 1793, also published in the *New York Magazine* or *Literary Repository*, Vol. 5, 1794. Now known to have been written

Shenandoah are postponed much longer. Do not forget how the trade of Fredericksburg and Falmouth, Hanover Town on York river and indeed Richmond itself will be affected by the opening of this navigation. I shall not be at all surprised therefore if applications to the Assembly of Virginia respecting it should meet with much coldness and difficulty."

In fact Virginians generally appear to be gradually losing interest in the work, but Maryland ever stood loyally ready to assist by encouragement and funds.

A month later Washington wrote that "The Pennsylvania Canal Company has granted Mr. Weston permission to visit Great Falls." Again he wrote in February:

"Weston was detained by canal matters; much has been said of late of the inclined plane in Connecticut river—of the utility of it I mean. It would be well to question Mr. Weston pretty fully on this mode of raising and lowering boats, as the simplicity, cheapness and effect is the subject of eulogism."

And in March:

"Presume Weston is on the Potomac. He is certainly a judicious man. I am pleased to learn that the locks which have been erected at Little Falls have stood the test of a first trial so well and this pleasure will be increased if Mr. Weston should make a favorable report of them."<sup>16</sup>

by Tobias Lear in the interest of the Potowmack Company. On the 2d of August Washington had written Lear from Mt. Vernon, "Monday next being the day fixed on by the constitution of the Potomac Company for their annual meeting, and as you seem resolved to relinquish your present office as president,—I wish you would turn your thoughts attentively to the situation of it and revolve seriously on characters fit, and proper to supply the places, of those who perhaps ought to, as well as those who will quit the directorship; that our struggles in that interesting and expensive concern the labor of years may not end in disgrace and loss."

<sup>16</sup> "An Historical Account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of Canal Navigation," Philadelphia, 1795. By order of the Company, Robert Morris, President. William Weston was the engineer and superintendent of the Schuylkill and Susquehanna canal; page 68, "Early in



The gentleman made his visit and examination, confirmed Brindley's advice as to the course of the canal and locks and returned with £370 ster. in pocket.

Early in 1795 twenty-four shares were sold at Alexandria and eleven at Georgetown for fairly good prices, the principal purchasers being one Jesse Simms and Gustavus Scott. At the general meeting it was announced that tolls would be collected above Great Falls, the navigation being so far improved as to justify the collection. Books were opened for one hundred additional shares in order to commence work on the Shenandoah River. The state of Maryland subscribed for sixty, individuals for the remaining forty. The locks and works at Little Falls were reported as completed and all impediments removed between that place and Great Falls. £10 ster. was called on the new shares. Renewed vigor was infused into the directory and two of them made a close inspection of the river from Cumberland down. Workmen were employed at many places, but still an experienced engineer was badly needed at Great Falls in the erection of the large locks. Lear appealed to Washington who soon replied:

“November 30 1795. If the directors are in want of such a character as the enclosed letter describes, it may be well to intimate it as soon as possible as it is not likely Mr. Myers will remain long unemployed as lock navigation is contemplated in many parts of the country. I have not seen the

the month of January, 1793 arrived from London Wm. Weston, Esq. the engineer engaged by the company, a gentleman who had directed the execution of some of the principal canals in England, whose great abilities activities and experience in all the branches of his department have merited and obtained the perfect confidence and esteem of the managers, and of whose advice and assistance which have been solicited and given as occasion might permit, will be of the utmost importance towards facilitating improvements of a similar nature in the neighboring states.”





OLD STONE AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE OLD CANAL AROUND LITTLE FALLS

(Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon Foster)



gentleman myself but understand from others that his testimonials are full and ample & that he is a stout and healthy man . . . P. S. I will send to & have a little conversation with Mr. Myers and give you the result in my next."

December 26th:

"This letter will be handed you by Capt. Myers, of whom I have made mention in a former letter. Being desirous of knowing whether the Directors of the Potomack Company are disposed to employ him as an engineer & superintendent of their lock navigation, and on what terms, he has resolved to wait on them for those purposes. The testimonials of his skill as an Architect, and of his knowledge relative to locks, &c. will I presume be presented to you. These with such farther inquiries as prudence may induce you to make, will enable you to decide on your measures and thereby place Capt. Myers on the ground of Certainty."

In the minutes of the directors' meeting at Union Hotel in Georgetown on the 4th of January, 1796, we read:

"Capt. Christopher Myers having been invited by the Directors to meet them on the subject of engaging as engineer and superintendant of the works to be executed on the Potomac produced at this meeting documents and plans as evidences of his fitness for the business in which his services may be required upon the examination and consideration of which;—

Resolved, that a stipend of \$1600 per year be offered to Capt. Myers as a compensation for his services, with this understanding, that at the expiration of the year, such further allowance may be made to him as shall appear to the directors adequate to his services, it being thought best to put it upon this footing as Capt. Myers is unacquainted with the expense of supporting a family &c. in this country. . . . This having been communicated to Capt. Myers he accepted the same."

At the meeting of the next month it was resolved to immediately complete the house on the lot belonging to

the company at Great Falls and to erect such other works as may be necessary for the accommodation of the hands who may be employed in the cheapest manner that will answer the purpose. The dimensions of the building for the hands to be 72 feet long by 18 wide, 7 feet high in the clear, covered with plank. Also that a quantity of three-inch rope—not less than two coils—be procured and fixed in the ring bolts below the Falls for the purpose of hauling boats up the river. John Henry was employed as clerk for the company at a salary of \$500. There was still much trouble in securing skilled workmen. Work was pushed on the residence for the superintendent, which was of stone and brick, two stories, 25 feet front, 35 in depth. A second call was made for 10 per cent. on all shares. Again collections were difficult, measures were taken to force payments, while \$1,500 was discounted at the Bank of Columbia.

And now appears upon the minutes the name of Thos. Beall, of Sam'l, with whom there was much trouble over a contract to clear the upper river. This worthy gentleman was a pioneer at Fort Cumberland, a very prominent man in western Maryland, who donated ground for the courthouse and offered to erect the building if the state would organize a new county. The present beautiful structure and the handsome old school opposite occupy sites given by him. He had contracted on the last day of 1792 to clear the river of all obstructions and to open canals through all shoals from Cumberland to Williamsport within one year for the sum of £1,900 current money of Maryland, giving bond for £3,800 for faithful performance. Of course the task was an impossible one, but he claimed to have performed it. His time was extended and in 1796 he was paid £80 in order to encourage him to complete

his contract, which he never did. Final settlement was made in 1799, after his failure to comply with the terms of two succeeding contracts.

In July, 1796, a market house, thirty by fourteen feet, was built in Matildaville. There was another call for twenty per cent. on new shares. The breadth of the locks at Great Falls was extended to fourteen from twelve feet. More Irish laborers were bought in Baltimore on a credit of sixty days. Tobias Lear was in August elected president, with Keith, Templeman, Fendall and John Mason directors. A settlement was had with General Darke, who had furnished supplies to the company from its organization.

With the advent of the brilliant John Mason into the directory renewed energy characterized the proceedings of the company, which was composed largely of the conservative wealthy class that we know as the Federalist political party. With the exception of two years he remained in the directory until the company was merged into the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company in 1828, most of the time as its president, thus following the example of his father, George Mason, who had been the treasurer of the Ohio Company and ever refused to acknowledge its extinction.

It was ordered that Captain Myers, the engineer, be allowed \$2,400 per annum for this year and the next and the further sum of \$5,000 if he completes the locks at Great Falls so that loaded boats can pass in twelve months, or \$2,500 if in fifteen months, or in proportion for any time above twelve and under fifteen. Beall was paid another sum of \$400 to complete his contract. A third appeal was made to the legislatures for a further extension of time, which, as always, was readily granted. Myers was a disagreeable person, and the directors had many unpleasant affairs with him. He

obstinately refused to deliver to them his specifications and plans for the locks, he demanded an annual stipend of \$4,000, he frequently absented himself for weeks from the works. Finally in May, 1797, this letter was addressed him:

“*Sir*, For certain reasons, which may be made known when necessary, we consider you as discharged from the service of the Potowmack Company.”

(Signed by the president and directors.)

There were in this year two more calls for ten per cent. each. Investigation revealed that £11,724 had been expended in 1796 at Great Falls. Retrenchment again became the order of the day. At a called meeting of the stockholders it was ordered that the work for the present be confined to the space between the basin and the two lower lock seats, that the acting directors take measures to carry on the work on this plan in the most economical manner, also that they have a platform or an inclined plane constructed to make it more convenient to take flour or other goods from the lower lock seats to the river. Later the directory resolved to engage a superintendent of excavation of the lower lock seats, to have carts, horses, etc., to transport flour from the basin to the inclined plane, and for hauling of sand, etc. Lear's storehouse was secured for deposit of such flour as might be sent down the river to be put below in transit; resolved to charge ten cents per barrel for storage and transport. Another change was made in the course of the locks. Leonard Harbaugh was employed to superintend construction of the locks. Ten per cent. again called for and another sale of delinquent stock ordered. A letter was received from Ferdinand Fairfax, a godson of General Washington, relative to opening the navigation of the



Shenandoah. In excavating for the lower locks a borer's work was estimated to be six feet; in case he did not complete that amount he was to be deprived of his daily quota of whiskey.

At the general meeting in August, when 308 shares were represented, it was resolved to relinquish any exclusive rights the company held by acts of the legislature to the improvement of the Shenandoah in favor of any local company that would be formed within nine months and render that river navigable to boats carrying fifty barrels of flour within three years. It was ordered to sell or mortgage all the shares belonging to the company. The directory was authorized to open books for thirty additional shares at £135 ster. Also to mortgage the tolls for the amount of \$16,000, all monies to be applied to the works at Great Falls. Application was made to the legislature for authority to collect tolls at Great Falls on condition of delivering at the expenses of the company all articles subject to tolls into boats below the Falls.

Funds being entirely exhausted all sorts of projects were considered for carrying on and completing the work at Great Falls. The German indented servants were sold, laborers were discharged. In distress a special meeting of the shareholders was held in February, 1798, of which Thos. Sim Lee was chairman and Benj. Stoddart secretary. The directors were then authorized to borrow not more than 100 shares from the proprietors to mortgage for loan, said stock to be returned on or before August, 1800. Washington attended this meeting and voted his 73 shares. The report of the president graphically gives the situation:

*“Gentlemen, Agreeably to the instructions and power given to us at your last annual meeting, we have used our best endeavors to procure funds for carrying on and completing*

the works of the Company at Great Falls; but all our exertions have been ineffectual,—Aid from individuals could not be expected upon any terms in our power to offer.—Application has been made to the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland for a grant of money, either upon loan, or to be vested in new shares as they might choose; but without success.

“That no opportunity of pushing on the works at the Great Falls might be lost, while the proper season continued, the president and directors have obtained, on their notes, for the use of the Potomac Company, from the Bank of Columbia, \$4500, and from the Bank of Alexandria \$1500. Beside which there is yet due for wages of workmen and other expenses incurred on account of the Company’s work, about \$4000, making in the whole the sum of \$10,000.

“To meet these engagements, which must be done in a very short time, there is only a balance of \$1200 due from subscriptions to shares, that can be calculated upon; and twenty-nine shares of the Company, which were bought in for the Company at the public sales, as stated in our last report of August. To offer these shares in the market at the present moment, would not only cause a heavy sacrifice to the Company in the sale of them, but it would also greatly depress the value of the stock in the public estimation.

“Under these circumstances we have thought it our duty, gentlemen, to call a general meeting of the stockholders, that they might take such measures relative to the affairs of the Company as in their wisdom should seem proper. But we cannot forbear to impress upon you the *necessity* there is for obtaining the means of meeting the present engagements of the Company without delay, as well as the *expediency* of providing funds to continue the operations at Great Falls, if not with the activity that could be wished, at least to prevent their being stopped altogether.

“From a draft of the works at the Great Falls, which will be laid before you, you will see the progress that has been made at that place. To complete the locks there from the present state of the work, will, from the best estimates we can make, cost \$40,000. But so much will depend upon the rise

or fall of labor, provisions &c. in the prosecution of the work, that no certain estimate can be made.

“We have obtained from the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland a law authorizing the collection of full tolls immediately at or near the mouth of Conococheague and at or near the Great Falls or Watt’s Branch, on condition that the Company shall receive at the Great Falls, transport across the lock seats, and put into boats below, such articles as may be brought there for transportation. Tolls are also granted at the Little Falls on all articles not passing the Great Falls. The legislatures have also extended the time for completing the navigation, to the year 1802. From these tolls a sum may be expected for the present season that will give some aid in carrying on the work, beside paying the expenses of collection &c. and its increase will be in proportion to the activity with which the works may be carried on.”

“Signed, TOBIAS LEAR, Pres., JAS. KEITH, JOHN TEMPLEMAN, JOHN MASON.”

In May, 1798, it was resolved that the sum of \$6,000 be reserved from the money arising from the sale of stock for the building of a warehouse and a new machine for passing articles over the lock seats. The president was authorized to mortgage as many shares as could be obtained and to borrow as much stock as could be had, and to use as much thereof as would produce \$10,000. One of the “huts” at the Falls was rented for \$45 per annum. At the next meeting the president reported that a loan had been made by Daniel Carroll, of Duddington, of \$2,500 of six per cent. stock of the United States, and by General Washington of \$3,498 of the same. Another loan of \$2,000 might be expected from Mr. Carroll. The superintendent and overseer were discharged, as funds would not permit more work. Instructions were given the clerk at Great Falls as to the manner of delivering flour to boats at foot of the inclined plane.

At the general meeting in August it was reported that tolls collected at Great Falls amounted to over \$2,000, which was not at all discouraging for future prospects, if only the money could be raised for the completion of the locks. Some funds must have been obtained, for the following order was entered:

“Mr. Panton, Sir, As soon as Mr. Loeffler brings hands from Seneca have a small guard put in the canal at some convenient place twenty or thirty yards below the bridge at the Forge to throw the water below off, then clear out the passage through the basin, next that the stumps and obstacles be cleared out of the way at the little basin below the lock and place so stopped as to let the water discharge itself over the top of the dam.”

It is interesting to locate these localities on the ground. The Maryland legislature was petitioned to take one hundred additional shares. Harbaugh exhibited the model of a machine for letting down and hoisting merchandise at Great Falls with estimate of its expense; one was ordered and a shed built for its shelter. The horses and wagons were sold.

General Washington attended the general meeting on the fifth of August held in Georgetown. The affairs of the company were at the lowest ebb. The president reported that all efforts to obtain loans or aid from the Maryland legislature had failed. Work had in consequence been at a stand for the past two seasons. To save expense in the transport of merchandise at Great Falls a shed had been built at lower end of lock for warehouse and a new machine installed for hoisting, so all hauling had been saved. The tolls were less than the preceding year, owing to short crops and low water. An eloquent letter had been sent each shareholder and member of the legislatures representing the situation and soliciting relief.<sup>17</sup> It was

<sup>17</sup> See broadside, appendix B.

Sir

I have this day left with  
W. John Meier of Pennsylvania forty  
five pounds in Bank Bills equal to  
thirty-six pounds <sup>even</sup> money. As to  
interest I know nothing about it.  
Y. L. L.

W. M. Paca.  
24. Nov. 1793.





“Resolved, that there shall be paid upon each share an additional sum of not less than one hundred dollars, the whole amount not to exceed \$60,000 and that payment shall not be compelled until \$40,000 has been subscribed and the legislatures pass laws to enforce the payments. That the President and Directors of the Potowmack Company for the time being be authorized and required to petition the legislatures of Maryland and Virginia at their next sessions for the farther payment of at least one hundred dollars upon each share held by the said states respectively, as well as for a law empowering the President and Directors to enforce payment of such sums as individuals may agree to pay upon the shares held by them, and also directing that each share shall receive dividends in proportion to the sum actually paid upon it.”

Each failed; the \$40,000 was not subscribed, although General Washington headed the list with his twenty-three individual shares; the state of Maryland was obdurate.

The struggle was ended when the Maryland House of Delegates in July, 1799,

“Resolved, That the treasurer of the Western Shore be and he is hereby authorized and empowered to subscribe in behalf of this state for one hundred and thirty shares in the augmented capital stock of the Potowmack Company; vizt. the sum of £130 ster. for each share to be paid in six per cent. stock of the U. S. at par.

“Resolved, that the trustees of this state transfer the said amount of six per cent. stock to the president and directors of the Potowmack Company or their order on the Governor and Councils certifying to them that Bond with sufficient security has been lodged with them to complete the locks and navigation of said river at the Great Falls and not before.”

At the general meeting called for the 10th of December Washington voted his shares by proxy. The president recited the efforts to raise money for the completion of the locks, the proprietors resolved that one

hundred and thirty shares of stock be created and subscription lists opened for £130 ster.; also resolved that none of the funds advanced by Maryland be used before instructions from the next regular general meeting. At the called general meeting in January the president and directors were authorized and instructed to give a bond or bonds in their corporate capacity in the penalty of \$150,000 to the persons who subscribed the bond given to the state of Maryland, dated December 10, 1799, conditioned to relieve each and every one of them for all consequences which may result from said bond. This was carried by 288 votes; opposed were 88 cast by Cazenave for himself and the Hollanders.

In January Hartshorne resigned as treasurer and thus the last of the original officers of the company passed out. He was succeeded by Joseph Carleton, who served until his death in 1812; he also acted as secretary, much to the discomfort of the reader of his minutes.

The locks which had been originally planned to be one hundred by eighteen feet were by the legislatures reduced to eighty by fourteen; Weston had advised eighty by twelve. Boats were rarely more than seven or eight feet wide and sixty feet long; none were more than ten by seventy; the difficulty of ascent would never admit of greater size. Economy of water and time in the locks was a question, not to mention the excavation of solid rock for the lower locks, where 4,300 cubic yards of stone were to be removed.

With money the works were pushed. Leonard Harbaugh was again placed in charge, an iron chest was ordered for the use of the clerk at Great Falls, which had evidently not previously been needed. The basin was crowded with boats, the hoisting machine was working night and day. The president reported sufficient funds on hand to complete the navigation from

tide water to George's Creek! Work on the Shenandoah agitated. Probably one strong motive for undertaking this additional responsibility was the fact that the shareholders from Berkeley County were losing interest and sacrificing their stock.

At a meeting in June, 1801, at Great Falls, the directors ordered contracts made for timber for lock gates and decided that lock 1 should rise twenty-one feet instead of eighteen, lock 2 from fifteen feet to eighteen, 3 from twelve to ten feet eight inches, said 3 to be widened to admit two boats of usual size, 4 to be completed as a canal to communicate between 3 and 5, 5 to raise from twelve feet to sixteen and that 5 if necessary be enlarged or lengthened to contain enough water for the lower lock, that a reservoir be made east of 3 for supply of water. They authorized the superintendent to engage a master and common workmen to push the work. A Mrs. Jane Myers appears to have been speculating in Matildaville realty, as the directors rented her five houses until Christmas for four dollars each, monthly. According to the account of John Davis, a travelling Englishman, she also kept a public house.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> John Davis, "Personal Adventures and Travels of Four and a Half Years in the United States &c.," London, 1817. "I beheld the course of a large river abruptly obstructed by rocks over which it was breaking with a tremendous roar while the foam of the waters seemed ascending to the clouds and the shores that confined it to tremble at the convulsion. I gazed for some time in silent awe at this war of the elements, when having recovered from my admiration I could not help exclaiming to the Great Maker of Heaven and Earth 'Lord what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou regardest him?' A little below the Falls on the banks of the Potomac stand a few scattered buildings which form a kind of hamlet called 'Charlotteville' (Matildaville?). The first settler in this savage wilderness was the lady of General Lee from whose christian name the place takes its appellation. In a house of entertainment kept by widow Myers I was accommodated with a supper and a bed. This buxom widow was a Methodist and possessed of considerable property."

The president's report for 1801 is pleasant reading after its pessimistic predecessors.

“Since your last annual meeting we found no opportunity of having the locks at Great Falls undertaken by contract. . . . There remained therefore no alternative for the Company but to continue to carry on the work by hired laborers as in the past year. In this way we have pushed forward the operations with all the expedition in our power. It appeared however to us that as this progressed and branched out of course into different kinds of work it would become absolutely necessary to have constantly on the spot a person of experience and judgment in whom we could confide in order to secure as effectually as possible the speedy and faithful execution of every part of the plan. Accordingly early in the season we entered into an agreement with Leonard Harbaugh for this purpose. In this agreement it was a material consideration with us to interest him essentially in having the locks finished in time for boats to pass with the water of spring 1802. . . . Expense of the works at Great Falls had been \$21,000. . . . No debts (current) were due by the Company except for land condemned at Little Falls. . . . From this view of the Company's affairs we have now laid before you we presume you will derive much satisfaction. It must appear evident that without some unforeseen accident the great object held out in our last report, that of a free navigation of the Potomac during a considerable portion of the year from the mouth of George's Creek to tide water will be accomplished by the end of the year in time for the ensuing spring water.”

Keith and the same directors were re-elected.

There was a supplemental report of an accident to one of the workmen in consequence of which he had become blind. An appropriation was made for his support, and this was continued during the existence of the company. In fact the last entry in the minute books of the directory meetings is an order for the payment of his pension.

At this meeting an order was given for a complete map of the Potomac from Savage River to tide water. No mention is now made of the contemplated road west from the North Branch, western settlers were evidently not in mind.

In December, 1801, the directors made a report to the Assembly of Virginia that the locks were completed, slyly reminding them of the generosity of Maryland, and asking their assistance in making the Shenandoah navigable also, but the application was received too late for action at that session.

The locks were opened for business in February, 1802, and in continuous use until 1830. By the tables annexed you will see that the volume of trade was large and the receipts from tolls quite a respectable sum. These locks being the greatest engineering accomplishment of the eighteenth century in America, were visited by all travellers, domestic and foreign. In 1796 the British Minister with suite and a young lord who came from England for that express purpose spent a day at the Falls. Manasseh Cutler, who was interested in founding a colony on the Ohio for Revolutionary soldiers, left an account of his inspection.

“WASHINGTON, January 30, 1802. Went early in the morning to Georgetown where Mr. Frank Dodge, Mr. Tenney and I took horses and went up to the Great Falls, about twelve miles. Visited on the way the cannon foundry, saw them boring the solid cast iron cannon. Viewed the locks at the lower Falls where the boats pass with ease. The canal is about two miles in length. Passed the great bridge which is a very handsome one and well built in the form of the bridge over the Merrimac above Newburyport. The river very narrow near and at the bridge, but said to be deep. Arrived at the Great Falls and put up at Mrs. Myers. The appearance of the river is singular; filled with rocks about three fourths of



a mile—no large cataracts but frequent falls and brought into a narrow bed with high rocky banks at the locks. At the lower locks appeared about forty feet wide; said to be thirty five feet deep. The work of the locks (six in number) very neat. The lower lock cut through a solid rock by blasting about forty seven feet deep and twelve feet wide. The water was to have passed this day but not being quite completed is to be opened for the passage of boats on Tuesday, February second. The canal is three fourths of a mile. It is a place capable of much business by water works, but indolence reigns and the country through which we passed the picture of laziness, negligence and poverty. Old fields and woods.”

The Rev. Mr. Cutler was accustomed to the prim countryside about Boston.

Had the company been content with the original intention of improving the navigation of the Potomac only all would have been well with them, but unfortunately they listened to the importunities of the business men on its tributaries and undertook the improvement of the Shenandoah, the Monocacy, the Antietam and the Conococheague. In 1802 the company declared its first and only dividend. In that year Chas. Simms, the ablest man ever associated with the company, became a director. He was an attorney of Alexandria, an original shareholder, with Jas. Keith the credential committee of the meeting of organization. The membership of the company now embraced the most prominent men of the newly formed District of Columbia; Thos. Law and the Carrolls were very active and always generous; Greenleaf held twenty-four shares.

At the solicitation of Washington an arsenal had been located at the mouth of the Shenandoah and a canal cut there for the convenience of the works, in consideration for its use the company offered the government to render the Shenandoah navigable; however





GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC IN 1802  
(Drawing by Beck, Lithograph in Library of Congress)



for a time they were unable to secure any concessions they could accept from the state of Virginia.

Work in the bed of the river was pushed, for which they had excellent facilities in the extraordinarily dry summer of 1802. Much trouble was caused by fish dams in the river and tributaries; many suits were entered against the owners.

In 1803 Virginia appointed commissioners to view the works on the Potomac, and as guests of the company they were royally entertained. The treasurer was ordered to procure a common seal of an appropriate design for the use of the company. Only two impressions of this beautiful seal are known to be in existence to-day. Funds were again becoming low, the directors were authorized to borrow from the banks for the work on the Shenandoah. Premiums were offered for good boats, as there seems to always have been a shortage.<sup>19</sup> Meetings of the directory were often held at Charles Town in 1804, work being pushed on the Shenandoah, where the locks were to be wooden. There was much difficulty in securing an amicable arrangement for the use of the government canal at the arsenal.

The amiable gentlemen directors always appreciated faithful service; at Christmas, 1803,

“In consequence of the services of Leonard Harbaugh in opening the navigation of the Potomac River as superintendent of the works generally and more particularly on account of the useful improvement in the lock gates made by him, a silver cup to contain one quart be procured with suitable devices and inscriptions under the direction of Mr. Dorsey Mr. Mason and Mr. Laird and that the same with the approbation of the general meeting be presented him.”

<sup>19</sup> See newspapers of corresponding date.

In 1805 Harbaugh was authorized to secure subscriptions on the Shenandoah to a loan, all subscribers to be entitled to free tolls on the rivers. A premium of five per cent. was later offered. The president reported to the general meeting that

“with pain we are under the necessity of informing the stockholders that for some time past we have on account of the want of funds desisted from all operations of any importance upon the Shenandoah. We owe the banks and individuals \$31,000. It is certainly an object of great importance to the Company to adopt the means of raising such sums as may be adequate to finishing the navigation of the Shenandoah from its forks to Balls’ Falls, if funds cannot be obtained to extend it into the Potomac.”

The collections of tolls for 1805 amounted to \$5,213, while the expenses had been \$19,447.

Nicholas King, whom we recollect from his plans of Washington, joined Harbaugh in locating the junction of the Shenandoah with the Potomac navigation. Mill owners on the former were notified that the company had the legal right to compel them to open their dams.

Wm. Hartshorne was the chairman of the general meeting in 1806. Four hundred and forty-two shares were represented. The board was ordered to render the Potomac navigable at low water at once. \$20,000 was required to complete the work in the Shenandoah. The president was authorized to borrow from the banks of Alexandria and Potomac. The president reported Shenandoah subscriptions from individuals to be \$15,060, of which \$5,570 had been collected, the locks at Lyttle’s Falls and Wilson’s upper mill complete with their canals, the lock at the lower mill nearly finished and considerable progress had been made on the remaining locks at the same place; no doubt was entertained but the whole of the above locks which were the

only ones necessary on the river will be completed during the month of October, and all other obstructions removed early in the next year from the forks of the Shenandoah to the Potomac, about fifty miles.

We learn from an order of the directors that the channels in the bed of the Potomac were improved by banking with saplings and brush loaded with stone. For some unexplained cause Harbaugh was discharged in November; directors Foxall and Peter were expected to find a substitute. In the settlement of his accounts in February Mrs. Harbaugh was allowed \$30 for attendance on sick men. Thomas Harbaugh was appointed in his brother's place.

The country was awakening to the value of improved roads and communications under the inspiration of the enlightened views of President Jefferson and Secretary Gallatin. In 1806 was issued the famous order for reports of all public works in use or in contemplation in the entire country; this order was received by the shareholders at the general meeting in 1807, when Chas. Simms was elected president and served for eight years in that capacity. The president at that meeting reported:

“the completion of the works on the Shenandoah, boats from Port Republic could reach tide water; the navigation might have gone higher if the residents had been more interested and generous. Business was hampered by lack of sufficient boats to carry produce, only about sixty five of the best class being employed few were provided with tarpaulins and hand pumps. Neither was the flour of the best quality, nor were the barrels what they should be.”

John Mason compiled the report of the Potowmack Company for the Secretary of the Treasury and it was a masterpiece in its way.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See appendix C.

At the meeting in August, Hartshorne was again chairman. A petition was ordered to Virginia and Maryland to form by-laws for the regulation of the company's business and for the protection of merchandise in transport; also to render it easy for foreigners to transfer stock. The people on the Shenandoah were making much trouble with mill dams and fish pots. New gates were ordered for the locks at Great Falls and stone was to replace the wooden locks at Little Falls.

Again the company was out of funds. Rather than appeal to the Maryland legislature or farther increase the stock a lottery was suggested. This was the popular mode of raising money for all kinds of schemes, even churches were built with the proceeds and orphan asylums thus endowed. A special general meeting was called for the fourth of May, 1809, where 144 shares were represented. It was then resolved

“That the president and directors of the Potomac Company be authorized to make an appeal to the next session of Congress to pass an act to authorize the Company to raise by one or more lotteries the sum of \$100,000 for completing the navigation of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, or to obtain from Congress such sum of money as they may be disposed to grant in any other mode for that purpose.”

Jos. Riddle, David Wyley, Dan. Carroll, of Duddington, Cuthbert Powell and John Fendall were appointed a committee to assist the directory.

Philip B. Key was the chairman of the meeting in August, 1809, 382 shares represented. The president reported the directory considered it their duty explicitly to state that unless money could be procured in some way or other the progress of the useful work in which the company has been so long engaged and have expended so much money must cease.



At the meeting in 1810 a lottery scheme under the laws of Maryland was adopted. The appeal to Congress had signally failed, as any proposition coming from a concern notoriously Federalist was bound to do. And just then, too, the national government was much engaged in solving riddles propounded by Napoleon and Great Britain. As usual in such cases of disturbance capital sought secure hiding places and all enterprises suffered.

The act of the state of Maryland secured at the solicitation of the directory authorized a lottery to raise \$300,000 for the improvement of the navigation of the Potomac and its branches, of which the following is the authorized ticket:

“Potowmack and Shenandoah Navigation

Lottery.....No.....

“By authorization of the State of Maryland,

“This ticket will entitle the Bearer to such prize as may be drawn to its number if demanded within twelve months after the drawing shall have been completed, subject to 15% deduction.

“By order of the President & Directors of the Potowmack Co.

“(Signed) .....Treasurer.”

A special meeting was called for the 10th of May, 1810, when it was resolved that the bond demanded by the state of Maryland for the correct conduct of the lottery should be given under seal of the corporation. The agents to be employed to also serve under bond. Later Joseph Carleton, the treasurer of the company, was appointed agent for the sale of tickets with a salary of \$500 per annum with travelling expenses. Tickets were to be sold for \$10 each with a discount for blocks of five hundred. Fortunately the honorable gentlemen could not foresee the disasters this would bring upon them.

Thompson Mason was the chairman of the general meeting in August, 387 shares represented. The president reported:

“\$10.343 expended, \$7915 received from tolls. The want of funds prevented progress in improving the beds of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. He recited the appeal to the Maryland legislature to authorize a lottery and they, influenced by a spirit of patriotism and liberality honourable to themselves, passed an act authorizing the Company to raise by lottery or lotteries, the sum of \$300.000 for the purpose of the improvement of the navigation of the river Potomac and its tributary streams; a sum amply sufficient to accomplish that great and useful object in the most full and complete manner. Whether the benevolent and liberal views of the Assembly of Maryland in granting to the Company so important a privilege will be realized, depends on the spirit and liberality of those interested in the agriculture and commerce and in the growth and prosperity of the towns in the fertile and extensive country adjacent to the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. If they should not justly appreciate the advantages which will result from making those rivers navigable and patronize the lottery with spirit and energy, no hope can be entertained that the lottery will succeed; but it is believed that they will avail themselves of so fair an opportunity of promoting their own interest and prosperity.”

The directory then announced the scheme of the lottery to raise \$20,000 with one of their number, Josiah Thompson, as special agent in charge.

Tobias Thompson was in charge of all work on the rivers.

A farther extension of five years was asked from 1811 in which to render the Potomac navigable in the dryest seasons. With Chas. Simms, a Virginian, president, the custom of holding alternate directory meetings in Alexandria was resumed, except when it was necessary to meet at some place on the upper river.

At the general meeting in 1811, Daniel Carroll, Esq., chairman, the president reported:

“\$21.505 expended, principally on debts, \$22.542 on bank curtailments, interest and expense of the lottery. Receipts from tolls \$22.542. Impressed with the importance of drawing the first class of the lottery they were under the necessity of commencing the drawing of that class under circumstances unfavorable or of relinquishing the plan of raising money by lotteries and the prospect and advantages of rendering the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers navigable at all seasons within a reasonable time. Rather than the public and the Company should be deprived of these advantages they thought it better to encounter the risk of drawing the lottery with a large proportion of the tickets remaining unsold, and accordingly commenced the drawing on the 6 May last and have drawn 8000 tickets. In the course of the drawing the wheel has gained \$21.060 and an unusual great proportion of the large prizes still remain in the wheel; a well grounded hope may be entertained of \$10.000 or \$15.000 being raised by the first class of the lottery, which they flatter themselves, has and will be so conducted as to give general satisfaction and to facilitate the drawing of subsequent classes.”

He also reported that private parties along the rivers occasionally assisted in the work by labor or funds.

The laws on riparian rights were to be invoked against unpatriotic citizens of Virginia.

Permission was secured from the Secretary of War to erect a warehouse on public ground at Harper's Ferry.

Maryland citizens have always been public spirited. A subscription of \$20,000 was raised for the improvement of the Antietam River from the Pennsylvania line. It was offered to the company, who accepted it at six per cent. to be repaid in tolls. Work to be immediately commenced. John Rogan appointed superintendent of the work at \$50 per month.

Legal difficulties were accumulating at different points, so Upton Lawrence and Sam'l Hughes were retained as counsel for the company in 1812. In May the greatly esteemed treasurer, Jos. Carleton, died and Joseph Brewer was appointed, while Jonah Thompson took charge of the lottery business. New locks were ordered for Little Falls to be twelve feet wide. Land to be there condemned for change in direction. Much annoyance in regard to river frontage. At the appointed directory meeting in July there was no quorum for the first time in the history of the company. At the general meeting in 1812, Jas. Keith, chairman, the president reported:

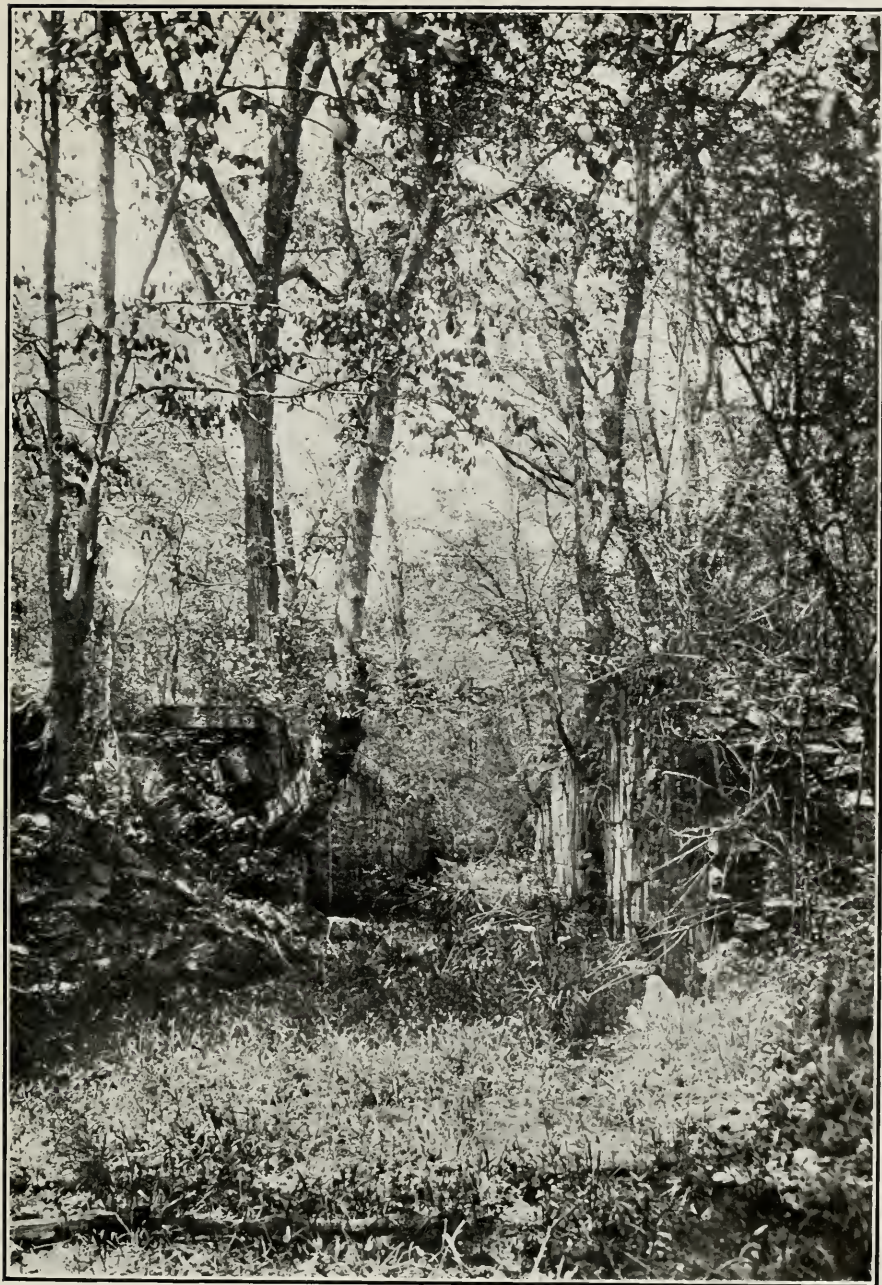
“New locks of stone at Little Falls. Permanent low water navigation in the Potomac completed to Stubblefield. Expenditures \$32,257, \$12,856 for bank curtailments, discounts and debts to Maryland for loans; \$2083 expended on Antietam, subscriptions \$5708. Tolls collected \$14,394. Principal merchandise flour, 75,235 barrels, 3,946 barrels of whiskey, 414 tons iron.”

The president regretted that some lottery debts could not be collected without suit. In the present distracted state of the country he doubted if the second drawing would be successful. The debt of the company amounted to \$48,801, resources \$5,775.

The Shenandoah people were becoming very impatient of the delays in the work and did not hesitate to so express themselves in most emphatic language, hence the company resolved:

“That if a subscription can be made by them in loans of money and labor sufficient to improve the navigation of the North Branch so as to make it navigable at all seasons, or with a small rise of water, as soon as the Directors shall be informed thereof, that they will direct the superintendent of





THE FIRST LOCK AT THE GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC

(Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon Foster)





the Company in conjunction with a commissioner or commissioners to be appointed by the said subscribers to lay out the said branch from its mouth to Mill Creek, in convenient districts and contract and agree with such commissioners for opening and improving the respective districts of said river for such sums of money as may be agreed on by said parties on any district of said river being made navigable according to contract, and loans and labor made and performed by individuals, and a certificate thereof given by the commissioner of such district of the sum each subscriber is entitled to receive for money or labor, that the Potomac Company will pay an interest of six per cent. per annum on the amount. . . . And the president and directors do promise and agree that the amount expressed in such certificate shall be refunded and paid to the legal holder of them in five, six and seven years in equal installments and the interest thereon shall be punctually paid annually."

The next lottery drawing was ordered for November 27.

A very ugly dispute arose as to the ownership of tickets not paid for at the time of the drawing. It was submitted to arbitration and decided in favor of the company, but the opportunity was given the claimants to select others if they would give security. The question was not finally decided for several years.

Rivals appeared in the field, undeterred by the troubles of the Patowmack Company. The directors therefore employed Thompson Mason to present a memorial and remonstrance to the Assembly of Virginia against the passage of an act for incorporating a company for cutting a canal from Seneca Falls to Hunting Creek. He appears to have been successful, as we hear no more of the undertaking.

The showing of the business done on the Potomac probably caused the Maryland Assembly to again assist the company by a loan of \$30,000 in 1813. A special

meeting of the stockholders was held on February 22 for consideration of the question of acceptance. In explanation of this we must remember the financial condition of the United States in that year and also that the political complexion of the company was Federalist; this last was probably the cause of John Mason's leaving the directory, to return in two years however.

About 1812 David Bailie Warden, consul general at Paris, now remembered as a collector of Americana, visited in the United States and was a guest in the beautiful home of John Mason on Analostan Island. In 1816 he published in Paris, "Chrorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia, &c.," in which he thus described the work at Great Falls then in the flush of success:

" . . . The boats employed for the navigation of these rivers are 75 feet long, 5 feet wide, and draw 18 inches, carry 20 tons. Two with more than 100 barrels of flour each, pass the locks at Great Falls in an hour, and it rarely happens that the boat or cargo is injured. The cost of carrying a barrel of flour from Cumberland to George Town was one-half less by water, including tolls, than by land."

A loan of \$10,000 at six per cent. was offered by Edward McCarty and others of the upper river for the improvement of the navigation of the Potomac from Coxes Falls to the mouth of New Creek, to be repaid out of tolls collected. It was accepted and the superintendent directed to make the necessary contracts. Mr. McCarty will be remembered as having been associated with Thos. Beall, of Sam'l, in his first contract.

William Marbury was the chairman of the general meeting in 1813, when the president reported \$32,437 expended; \$11,816 tolls collected. The want of funds prevented the progress of the works to the extent that

could be wished. The directory, impressed with the importance of obtaining funds if practicable, had made application to the legislature of Maryland for a loan of money and that honorable body with their usual liberality agreed to loan the company \$30,000 in six per cent. U. S. bank stock on the security they required being given. Subsequent events rendering it highly probable that U. S. stock might greatly depreciate the directory did not think it advisable to accept of the loan without the approbation of the company. Workmen were employed in removing obstacles about Great Falls and in repairing locks. In consequence of the trouble with Gray and Milligan over contract and claim to a \$20,000 prize and the difficulty in selling tickets in the present distressed state of the country the managers thought it most prudent to suspend the drawing of the lottery, at least until the dispute with Gray and Milligan be settled. Ordered, arbitration with these obnoxious gentlemen. The pension to the blind laborer at Great Falls, as always, provided for.

The Shenandoah proposition was not making much progress and the people along the stream were in a bad temper. In October President Simms with directors Thompson and Marbury appointed a meeting at New Market for conference. After some pretty direct statements the gentlemen on the part of the Patowmack Company proposed that they should relinquish all rights to open the Shenandoah navigation and transfer them to a company to be established by Virginia, on consideration that such company reimburse the value of the locks and other work done that may be deemed useful to the new company, such to be ascertained by two or more experienced and disinterested persons to be chosen by the respective companies. If such com-

pany be not formed in six months and work commenced in eighteen months after forming of the company the rights of the Patowmack Company to continue, and a farther term of five years shall be allowed them for completion of work. The proposition was accepted and was referred to annual meeting of the Patowmack Company for ratification; which was secured in a special meeting for November.

Then attempts were made to arrange with Antietam and Monocacy subscribers.

“1813

“TO THE HONORABLE SENATE AND HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA;

“The petition of the president and directors of the Potowmack Company respectfully represents that the Potowmack Company have long since removed the great obstacles to the navigation of the Potomac river from tide water to about thirty miles above Cumberland so as to render the navigation safe and easy for boats with a moderate rise of water and for the last three years have used all the means within their power to increase the depth of the water in the bed of the river by making dams in the shallow parts of the river and although considerable progress has been made in effecting that object yet it is not so fully accomplished as they wish and the interest of the community requires; your petitioners therefore humbly pray your Honors to allow the Potowmack Company the farther time of five years to be computed from the expiration of the time already granted. Finding it was not practicable with the funds they possessed, or could procure to complete the navigation of the Shenandoah river within a reasonable time, although the principal obstacles have been removed at a great expense, and sundry inhabitants of the counties adjacent being desirous that it should be made navigable as soon as possible and believing that object would be more speedily effected by forming a new company, they entered into an agreement with them for that purpose.”

A petition was made to the legislature of Maryland to modify the proffered loan so as to enable the company to refund in same kind of stock and to accept as pledge the tolls of the company, which probably was granted. The stock was to be deposited in such bank as would advance cash on it to be expended solely on the improvement of navigation from tide water to Harper's Ferry and for completing the locks at Little Falls, until the navigation should be such as to admit of the free and safe passage of boats with eighty barrels of flour every day in the year. Directors to visit the work once every month. Josiah Thompson was appointed superintendent. A second drawing of the lottery commenced in November.

At the general meeting in 1814 the president reported \$26,998 expended, tolls collected \$9,109. Received from Maryland \$30,000 in U. S. stock. Loans of \$19,790 on \$20,000 of the stock. McCarty's loan had been partly expended on the upper river. Work at Antietam suspended on account of non-payment of subscriptions. Locks at Little Falls nearly completed.

In November another \$5,000 was discounted. Chas. Simms transferred his stock and resigned as president to be succeeded temporarily by Elie Williams. Application was made to the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia for a law empowering the company to protect its water rights. Gray instituted suit against Jonah Thompson on the lottery prize question and won; thereupon appeal was taken to the U. S. Supreme Court.

This statement was issued in June, 1815:

"The directors find that the diminished intercourse on the river navigation during the war and the disbursements of the Company within that period on the new Locks at the Little Falls and other work, has so far depressed the funds of the



Company that with all the aid of accruing funds there will scarcely be a sufficiency to complete the new locks in time to pass boats and other craft before the old locks which are of wood and much decayed will be wholly unfit for use. The funds of the Company not being competent to the payment of discounts on the bank debts and continuing the work on the new locks, the alternative is left of discontinuing the work and paying the discounts, for a few months only, when the failure of the old locks will leave no means of paying debt or discount, or to suspend the payment of discount for a short period till the new locks are completed by which an ample revenue will be secured for the payment of both. . . . The directors do not hesitate to adopt the latter alternative. in full confidence that the measure will meet the concurrence of all concerned."

At the general meeting in 1815 Elie Williams was elected president, Geo. Peter, Wm. Marbury, Jonah Thompson and Jno. C. Vowell directors.

Thoroughly aroused the Shenandoah people presented this communication :

"A sufficient number of subscriptions have been obtained to constitute a company, but many, if not a majority, of them are conditional who will withdraw unless the directors of the Potomac Company will make the terms much more accommodating than the law prescribes. The people in the country complain that the Potomac Company has not treated them well, they say they have for many years held out the idea of a speedy accomplishment of that work in which they felt themselves so much interested, they say they were (many of them) induced to loan money to the Company and to purchase lottery tickets in order to promote so desirable an object, and nothing of any consequence has been done and when the Company discover they cannot accomplish it, when the prospect of suspension of commerce presented itself, when turnpike roads are opening in every direction, whereby the tolls will be greatly curtailed, the Potomac Company are willing to relinquish their claims on being paid the value of their im-



provements. The feeling of the people has been excited and their resentment aroused, and it will require considerable concessions to reconcile them, indeed some of them are so exasperated that nothing but an immense advantage from the navigation of the river would induce them to use it were it now complete under the management of the Potomac Company.

“I really think the Potomac Company ought in justice and in regard to their own interest, to bear a proportional part of the expenses of opening the Shenandoah river. If that river is opened there is no doubt but the tolls at Great Falls will increase more than 100%, I think 200%, whereas in its present situation it is a real expense to the Company. It is a maxim in justice that when two or more are materially benefited each should bear an equal share of the cost.”

Then the directors agreed to recommend to the stockholders to change the terms proposed and acceded to by the directors of the Patowmack Company and the persons present at the New Market conference as follows, thus:

“That instead of payment proposed to be made by the new company for the work done on the Shenandoah by the Potowmack Company the amount of the valuation to be made as agreed on shall be subscribed by the Potowmack Company to the stock of the new company and divide in common with their stock holders in proportion to the stock subscribed.”

The president reported at the meeting in August:

“The loan from Cumberland section has been expended on the North Branch. The contemplated improvement of the Antietam had been effected only in part from the refusal of a number of subscribers under an apprehension and belief (sanctioned by public opinion) that the estimate for the work was too low and some of the subscriptions too small. On an overture from the Shenandoah company a conditional proposition has been made to relinquish to them the tolls on the Shenan-

doah on condition they would complete its navigation within a given period. . . .

“The drawing of the second class lottery had commenced and progressed several days when it was interrupted and suspended by a dispute with a certain Robt. Gray respecting the property of a ticket which had come out of the wheel with a prize of \$20,000, while in possession of the managers and before it had been bought by Gray or any other person. This dispute produced a suit by Gray which was tried in the District Court of Alexandria and a verdict given against the Company; but under circumstances which made it advisable to appeal to the Supreme Court of the U. S. where the case is now pending, this will suspend the drawing of the lottery until the event is known. In the trial of this cause it became important to the Company that Col. Chas. Simms’ testimony should be used; he therefore thought proper to resign his seat at this Board and dispose of his interest to render him a competent witness.”

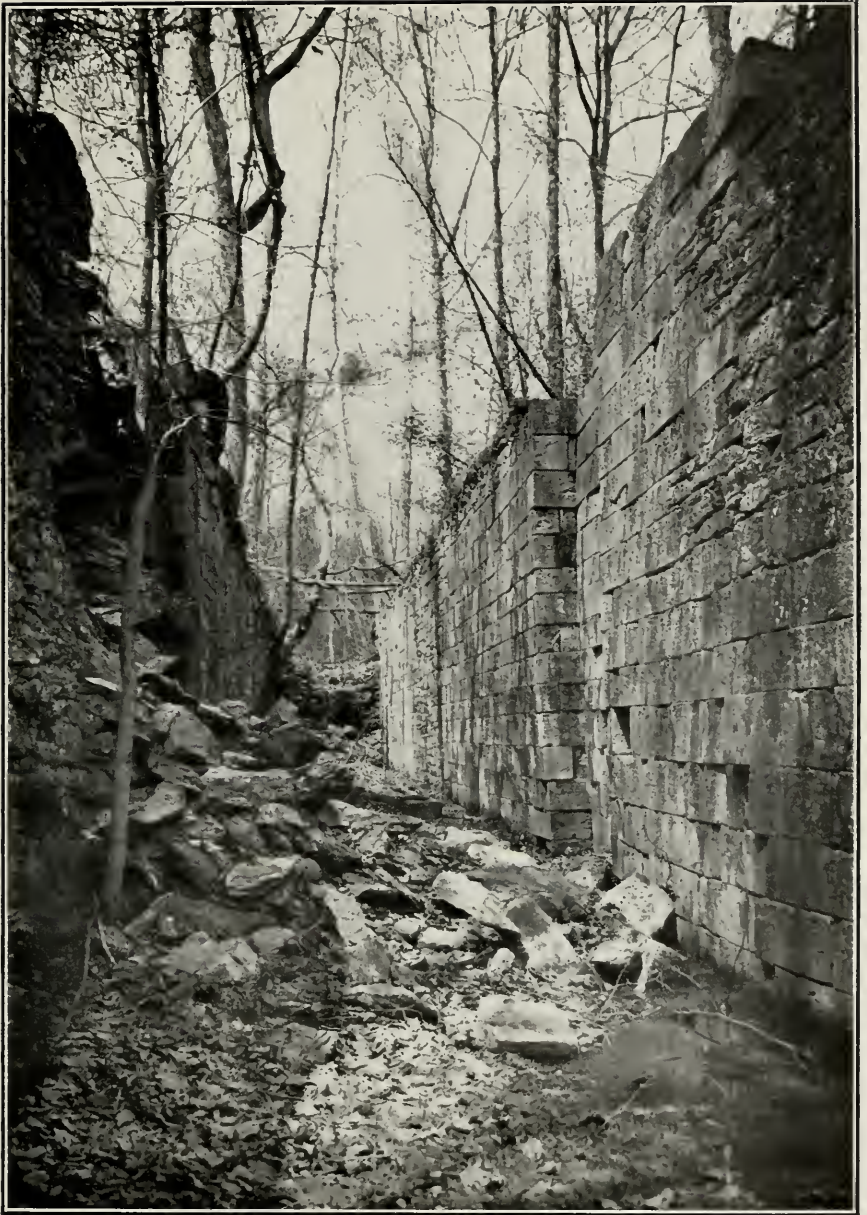
“Resolved; to aim at rendering the navigation of the Potowmack river such that boats with one hundred barrels of flour may pass at any period of the year when not prevented by frost.

“Resolved at the general meeting, ‘In regard to the Shenandoah Company as before given, that the Shenandoah company shall have the right any time within ten years to purchase the stock as subscribed by the Potowmack Company.’”

Jonah Thompson was appointed to meet members of the Shenandoah Company and to negotiate with them for transferring to them all the rights of the Patowmack Company on such terms as he may deem proper.

He reported:

“In consideration of the conveyance of the canals, cuts, locks and all and every of the rights, claims and interests of the Potowmack Company on the Shenandoah, the Shenandoah company do agree to pay to the Potowmack Company the sum of \$15,000 to be taken in shares of \$50 of stock of the new



THE SECOND LOCK AT THE GREAT FALLS OF THE POTOMAC

(Photograph by Miss Violet Bacon Foster)



company; and farther that the Potowmack Company do bind themselves to secure by indisputable title their rights to the said canals etc. clear of the adverse claims of the United States and individuals, *especially* of the U. S. Armory, Wilson's, Graves' and Craighill's mills. Subject to the ratifications of both companies at their general meetings.

"Notwithstanding the sum is much less than that expended and below its value, yet in consideration of various circumstances and the accommodation of extensive and fertile settlements remote from market the directors do agree."

The treasurer was ordered to pay Jonah Thompson \$191.51 for services and expenses, and thus was closed a stormy episode in the history.

In 1816 the president reported expenditures of \$40,282, with receipts from tolls of \$7,501. Payments had been made of pressing claims on old debts under judgments, for labor, for repairs to locks and for salaries.

The suit brought by Gray was decided in his favor by the Supreme Court, although the company was represented by such distinguished men as Mr. Walter Jones and Mr. Pinckney. This discomfiture so changed the aspect of the lottery as to render the tickets on hand in a measure unsalable and a prosecution of the scheme hopeless in benefit and almost certain as to loss; in this unpleasant predicament the managers had no alternative but to wait for the sale of the tickets or to proceed in the drawing with a certainty of considerable loss. It was

"Resolved to borrow if possible \$26.000 for the new locks at Little Falls and payment of old claims.

"Resolved to ratify agreement with the Shenandoah company without guarantee against the United States or individuals."



In response the seven banks of the District loaned the company the \$26,000, to be repaid from tolls after settlement of current expenses.<sup>21</sup>

As usual the blind Wiley was voted his pension.

A special meeting was called in December, 1816, Geo. Peter, Esq., chairman, to consider another troublesome matter. Four hundred and thirty-eight shares represented. One John K. Smith had purchased the land about Little Falls and wished to combine with the company in control of the water rights in speculative interests. The company resolved:

“That as many mill sites be laid off along the canal as may be conveniently embraced within fifty four acres from the lower end of it the said sites to extend from the canal to the river; that five of these sites be sold at auction and the proceeds to be equally divided, the remainder of the sites to be alternately divided between the Company and Mr. Smith,—or he may hold option for ten days to pay for water rights \$60,000, the navigation not to be interfered with;”

which offer he declined.

The company accepted a compromise with Gray on the lottery question and the drawing proceeded.

A fine petition and statement of monies expended by the company with a tabulated statement of the business done in the time between 1799 and 1816 was prepared to present to the Virginia legislature in opposition to another company asking a charter for a canal from Seneca to Alexandria. It was prepared by John Peter and supplemented by a letter from John Mason to Chas. Fenton Mercer, asking him to present both to the legislature. In a petition an extension of time for three years for the completion of the work in the bed of the

<sup>21</sup> Columbia, \$8,100, Union, \$4,300, Farmers & Mechanics, \$3,300, Metropolitan, \$3,000, Patriotic, \$2,000, Washington, \$3,900, Central, \$1,400.



river was asked. Another project was to construct a canal from Leesburg to Alexandria. Mason wrote Mercer to have consideration of this postponed.

At the regular meeting in August, 1817, John Mason was elected president, which office he held for eleven years or during the farther existence of the Patowmack Company; 508 shares were represented. J. K. Smith was once more before them with a petition, saying he had been two years trying to adjust matters at Little Falls, he would now offer \$30,000 for water power on terms given Henry Lee at Great Falls, for which he paid nothing; if declined he would bring suit to determine his rights. He called on the stockholders to decide on the issue.

The president reported collection of tolls \$13,948. During the past season's unusual low water boats with fifty to sixty barrels of flour had continuously passed down from Harper's Ferry. From Mason's report to Virginia it appears that total expenses from 1785, had been \$650,000, tolls from 1799, \$162,380.

In 1818 the treasurer of Maryland began asking about the debt and interest due the state. Jonah Thompson reported the final closing of the lottery with a profit of about \$486 and many prizes still unpaid.

At the general meeting the president reported the Little Falls locks open. \$15,000 had been borrowed from District banks on the condition that no farther work would be commenced until debts to them were paid. New gates had been provided for the lower lock at Great Falls. No settlement had been made with Smith. The lottery had not proved a success and Maryland had forbidden any more drawings under the old permit. Jos. Brewer, treasurer, resigned, Jas. Moore, Jr., appointed.

At a meeting of the Patowmack Company held at Semmes' Tavern in George Town the 2d day of August, 1819:

"William Marbury, Esqr. was appointed chairman and John K. Smith and Lewis G. Davidson a committee to examine the proxies who reported in due manner. Shares voting;—Maryland, 220, Virginia, 120, John Mason, 5, James Keith sr. 3, John C. Vowell, 6, Thos. Vowell, 6, William Marbury, 1, Wm. Campbell, 10, John Laird, 18, H. Foxall, 1, Jonah Thompson, 1, A. C. Casenove, 1, Amsterdam merchants, 49, James Keith jr. 10, Lewis G. Davidson, 3, John K. Smith, 1, 455 shares.

"Then proceeded to the election of president and directors to manage the business of the Company for the ensuing year, when the following persons were unanimously elected; John Mason Esqr. president, John Laird, Henry Foxall, Jonah Thompson and John C. Vowell Esqrs. directors.

"Resolved; That the president and directors communicate to the Treasurer of Maryland a statement of the receipts and disbursements of the Company during the last year, and to inform him of the inability of the Company to comply with the Resolution of the Legislature of that State in relation to the immediate payment of the interest which has accrued on the debt due it. That they express on the part of the stockholders the hope that he may not consider himself under the late resolution of the State compelled to bring a suit against the Company, at least until they can have time to make farther representations to the Legislature on that subject.<sup>22</sup>

"Resolved; That the president and directors present a memorial to the Legislature of Maryland at their next session setting forth the deranged state of the funds of the Company, the state of the navigation and a view of the facilities afforded in transportation to a large district of that State, and praying for the forbearance of the State in relation to the present debt, and for such other aid as the State may have in its power to grant.

<sup>22</sup> See appendix D.

“Resolved; That the subject of the letter this day received from Mr. John K. Smith in relation to the use of the surplus water at the Little Falls be referred to the President and Directors, who may call a meeting of the stockholders if they deem it necessary.

“Ordered; That the President and Directors allow Mr. Foxall what compensation they may think right for his attention to the locks at the Little Falls.

“Resolved; That the President and Directors request the board of works of the State of Virginia to permit their principal Engineer to examine the works executed and to consider those proposed to be executed on the river Potomac above tide water, and to explore the country lying between the waters of the Potomac and the waters of the Ohio, with a view to the best manner of improving the navigation of the river and of facilitating the communication, by way of the Potomac with the western waters, and for the purpose of reporting his observations and opinions on these points to the Board of Works and to the Potowmack Company.

“Resolved; That the President and Directors apply to the Board of Works of Virginia, or to the Legislature of that State to authorize the Board of Works, in their discretion as may be the proper course to grant such aid from the general fund appropriated for such purposes, as has been customary in relation to similar undertakings and the interest of that State may appear.

“(Signed,) WM. MARBURY.”

The president reported:

“No material change in the year. From the state of funds the Board did not think themselves authorized to attempt any thing more than to keep the present works in repair. The new locks at Little Falls have been put in good order. The gates to the lower lock at Great Falls which gave way during the last summer have been entirely renewed and well secured, and it having been found that all the gates of the other locks there are decayed and liable to be broken down and interrupt navigation it was determined to replace them. . . . With some

little repairs to walls the whole lockage at the two places will be in good order and likely to last a long time. Maryland extended the time on her debt provided the interest was paid to July last. Unable to pay the interest and some other pressing claims for making locks, deferred action to general meeting. Tolls collected \$12,514. from 775 boats."

In November the board agreed with J. K. Smith to use water power jointly at Little Falls, he furnishing land for mill sites, they surplus water for power; he agreed to erect a mill at once, they to guard against depletion of canal. There had previously been a large mill property at this point.

By the House of Delegates, Maryland, December 13, 1819:

"Whereas the State of Maryland by a large investment in the stock of the Potowmack Company is deeply interested in its prosperity, both as an object highly beneficial to the community and as a source of future revenue to the State, and as it is believed that by the consent of the State and of the stockholders generally, measures might be adopted to advance the improvement and completion of the said canal so as to render it profitable to the stockholders, and impart greater advantages to the State, therefore;—

"Resolved,—That the president and directors of the Potowmack Company be requested forth with to lay before the legislature such information relative to the situation of the Company as they may deem important, and that they suggest such plans for the consideration of the legislature as they may consider calculated to promote the interest of said Company, and State.

"Resolved,—That a copy of the above preamble and resolution be forwarded to the president and directors of the Potowmack Company."

Reply:

“TO THE HONORABLE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE  
HONORABLE SPEAKER OF HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF THE  
STATE OF MARYLAND;

“*Gentlemen*;—

“In obedience to the joint resolution of the two houses of the legislature of the State of Maryland passed on the 21st. of last month and by instructions from the Board of Directors of the Potowmack Company I have the honor to make the following communication;—

“On the one hand the situation of the Potowmack Company in its relation to the State of Maryland as a stockholder, as in its relation to all the other stockholders, is at present far from an agreeable one. Loaded with an heavy debt, it has not had it in its power to apply any of its large receipts in the way of dividends toward retributing them for the capital long ago invested, indeed it has been with difficulty, able to make the requisite repairs in its extensive works, pay indispensable current expenses, and provide in part for the interest of its debt.

“On the other hand, the situation of the Company in relation to that part of the State of Maryland which is contiguous to the waters of the upper Potomac and to all the community in any way concerned in the raising, transportation and sale of the produce of the extensive and fertile country bordering on the waters on either side, is highly favorable.

“For a detail of those advantages, and disadvantages, as well as for a minute description of the nature and state of the works, and of the extent of the improvements on the river reference is respectfully prayed to the several communications made in behalf of the Board of Directors for the information of the Legislature on the 30th June 1818, and on the 15th November 1819 to the Treasurer of the Western Shore of Maryland.

“An institution that shall be capable of facilitating the transportation of such vast masses of the products of agriculture and manufactures and of the objects of commerce and which furnishes at this time the means of bearing annually from the interior of the country to tide water markets produce



of the value of more than half a million of dollars, and at a saving in the carriage of at least \$50,000 in each year, can but merit the patronage and the assistance of the State whose country is pervaded by the navigation to which it has given rise.

“And accordingly the Potowmack Company from its origin to this time has received from both the states of Maryland and Virginia repeated evidences of encouragement and favour.

“The affairs of the Company may in a condensed view be presented thus;—

|                                                                                                                                                                              |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| “The capital or dividing stock is made up of                                                                                                                                 |              |
| 701 shares of £100 ster. or \$444.44 each                                                                                                                                    | \$311,555.55 |
| of which the State of Maryland holds 220 shares                                                                                                                              | 97,777.77    |
| “The State of Virginia 70 shares retained in its own right & 50 presented to Gen. Washington.....120 shares                                                                  |              |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | 53,333.33    |
| “Individuals      361      “                                                                                                                                                 | 160,444.45   |
| “In round numbers the whole sum actually expended on the works from the commencement of the operations of the Company in 1784 may be stated as                               |              |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | \$670,000.00 |
| “And the debt due from the Company including the \$30,000 and interest due the State of Maryland, at                                                                         |              |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | 150,000.00   |
| “The tolls received since the existence of the Company and re-invested in carrying on the works, except the small sum of \$3,890 once divided to the stockholders,—amount to |              |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | 185,202.78   |
| “An average amount of tolls now received may be fairly put at rather more than less than                                                                                     |              |
|                                                                                                                                                                              | 15,000.00    |

“If then new subscriptions were opened and additional stock was taken to an amount sufficient to pay the debt of the Company at par, or at the rate at which the original stockholders came in, the whole amount of the capital or of the dividing stock would be about \$462,000, on which (all the expensive and important parts of the work being finished) the tolls received would now, or very soon, give, after paying



current expenses, a dividend of 3% with a prospect of increase proportional to the population and cultivation of the upper country; but however advantageous such a measure would be to the stockholders generally, by bringing their inactive capital into use, it is believed that such is the present extreme pressure in money matters, it would be impossible to induce individuals concerned to take additional stock, and if this should be deemed an eligible course it could only be pursued by means of additional subscriptions on the part of the States of Maryland and Virginia for the whole sum requisite. Or should by similar acts the two states permit the stockholders in general meeting to open subscriptions for new stock at such rate below par as they might with a view to inviting new subscriptions, and to the ultimate interest of the present stockholders determine on, and direct the respective agents of the stockholders to take a considerable portion of the stock so created, it is possible that the assent of the stockholders to a reduction in the price of such additional shares might be had, and that the sum necessary to effect the object might be raised.

“But as it would be at a sacrifice, to a certain degree of the interests of those who originated the enterprise and advanced their money in its prosecution more than thirty years ago and since on former occasions when new subscriptions were opened the original stockholders on account of this advance had required that the shares should be set at a rate considerably above par and they were so taken up.

“This last plan is suggested with much diffidence.

“With very great respect etc. etc. JOHN MASON

“Note;—The original subscriptions were for 500 shares of £100 ster. each, (of which twenty-nine were forfeited and sunk) there were two other subscriptions opened and filled, one in 1796 for 100 shares, and one in 1798 for 130 shares, the last 230 shares were taken at 30% above par—that is at £130 ster.

“January 26, 1820.”

It was resolved in the general meeting of August, 1820, that

“The thanks of the stock holders of the Potowmack Company be presented to Mr. Thos, Moore for the trouble he has been pleased to take at their request with the permission of the Board of Works of Virginia in exploring the intermediate country with a view of connecting the waters of the Ohio and Potomac and of examining the navigation and the works on the Potomac and particularly for the able and important communication he has recently made to the Company on these subjects, and that the President and Directors express to Mr. Moore the high sense the stockholders entertain of his skill as an engineer and of the great worth of his general character.”<sup>23</sup>

“6th of August, 1821.

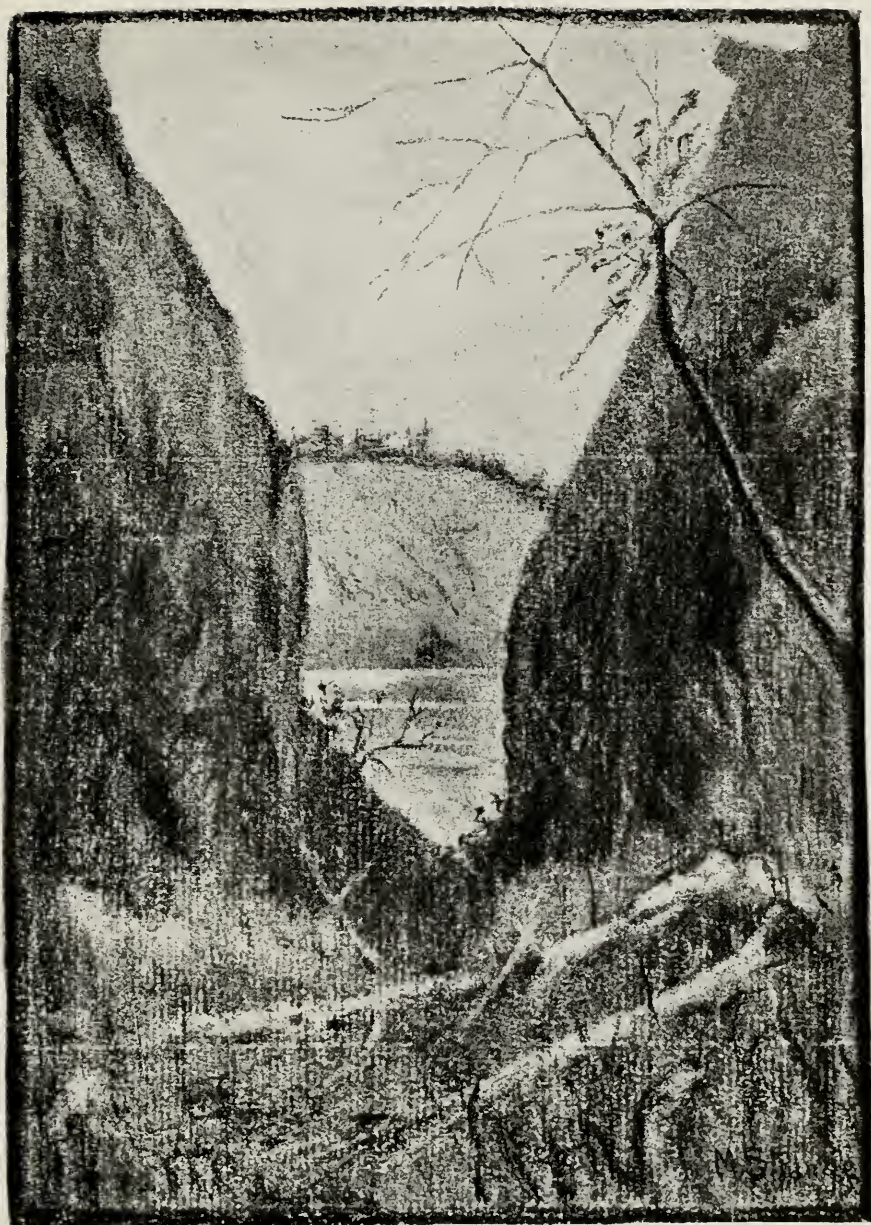
“The President and Directors of the Potomac Company beg leave to submit to the stockholders in general meeting convened the following report.

“Since the last general meeting nothing material has occurred in the affairs of the Company, except the appointment by the States of Virginia and Maryland of a board of commissioners to perform certain duties in relation to the Company, which circumstance will be more particularly noticed before the conclusion of this report.

“Everything in the power of the Directors has been done to preserve the works in good repair, and to keep the navigation at least in as favorable a state as it has been of late years.

“The pair of decayed lock gates at the Great Falls, which at the time of the last report, remained only to be replaced have been now completed and well hung. At the head of the canal at that place (mentioned by the engineer of the board of works of the State of Virginia on his examination of the summer of 1820) there was a deficiency of water, as compared with that usually in the river above, since then the wing dam at that place has been considerably raised and extended, the work has been done in a stable manner, and the canal cleansed, so that now the whole line of canaling and lockage of that important pass, is in complete order, and well capable of

<sup>23</sup> See appendix E.



VIEW OF THE POTOMAC RIVER FROM THE FIFTH LOCK AT THE GREAT FALLS  
(Charcoal Drawing by Miss Millicent Strange)





receiving and delivering all boats that can navigate the river in its present state of improvement. On the Seneca canal some work has been done in clearing it of the collection of drift timber and of the stone and gravel that the freshes had deposited there. At the Little Falls the works are in good repair, the canal has for some time been gradually filling up by means of ordinary deposit and the wash from the hills, and though no material delays or injuries have as yet been experienced from this circumstance, it has become necessary to provide against it; to facilitate the cleansing of this and the canal at the Great Falls the Directors have determined to build a small mud-machine to be worked by manual labor, calculated to save both time and expense in an operation which must from the nature of the case be frequently repeated. This machine is now on hand, and it is expected will be at work during the low water of the present season. The navigation has been carried on during the last season as usual and without interruption.

“By the return of the Treasurer numbered *one*, and herewith submitted, will be shown the number of boats employed and the kinds and quantities of produce and merchandise transported, with their estimated value, and that the tolls collected thereon have amounted during the year ending on the first day of this month to \$12,490.61. For the receipts and disbursements of the Company during the same period and for the present state of the debt of the Company, reference is prayed to the statements numbered 2, 3 and 4 and filed as making part of this report.

“The President and Directors can but call the particular attention of the Stockholders to the late step so important to their interests taken as before intimated by the States of Virginia and Maryland; they have procured and herewith lay before the meeting for the better understanding of that subject, the act of the Virginia Legislature passed the 27th of January last, and the corresponding resolutions passed by the Legislature of Maryland on the 16th of February following; and they have to add that it is known that in pursuance with these legislative provisions the executives of those states have

respectively appointed two commissioners, men of high standing and residing in the vicinity of the waters of the Potomac.

“No official communication has as yet been received from the commissioners, but it is presumed that it cannot be long before they will enter on the duties assigned them and that the Company will be called on for such information relative to its affairs as they may desire to possess. At the last general meeting the President and Directors made a full exposition of the then state of the differences existing between the Company and Mr. John Kelly Smith in relation to the Company’s rights and privileges on the river at and near the canal at the Little Falls, since then they have not heard any thing further from Mr. Smith or his agents upon the subject.

“(Signed) J. MASON  
JONAH THOMPSON  
JOHN LAIRD  
JNO. C. VOWELL”

“August 5, 1822. Annual Report.

“To the Stockholders of the Potomac Company the President and Directors respectfully report;—

“That during the last year the works of the Company and the navigation of the river have under gone no material changes—As usual the transportation by this channel has been considerable and constant at all times but the driest seasons and during the hard frost.

“On the works some repairs have become necessary. In two of the locks at the Great Falls the walls had partially given way, and the canal at the Little Falls had become so filled with sediment as to threaten an interruption to the navigation. The opportunity of the present dry season has been improved to rebuild the walls at the Great Falls, and to cleanse the canal and repair the sluice gates and wing dam at the Little Falls. Without accident the whole will be completed during the present month in an effectual and permanent manner.

“The annexed exhibits from the Treasurer will show in detail the present state of the affairs of the Company.

. . . . .



“The annual report of the state of the works and of the monied concerns of the Company as required by a law of the state of Virginia from all the incorporated companies in which that state has an interest, was made by order of the President and Directors on the 5th day of December last, a copy of which is herewith furnished.

“Within the last few months communications have been received from the agent of the state of Maryland for the Western Shore respecting the debt due to it from the Company, and from the Treasurer of the new Shenandoah Company inviting the attention of the Potowmack Company, as a matter of policy, to the question of reducing the tolls, in conjunction with the Shenandoah Company, on articles shipped on the Shenandoah river. Both these subjects having been deemed by the Board of Directors as proper to be submitted to the consideration of the Stockholders, were laid over for their instructions, and they are now accordingly submitted.

“In the month of January last a letter was addressed to the President of the Potowmack Company by the chairman of a committee of the House of Delegates of the state of Maryland requesting information on various points relative to the affairs of the Company, and asking his opinion of a plan proposed to be submitted to the legislature of that state for the improvement of the navigation of Potomac river; to which letter an immediate reply was made, and the information required, furnished. Copies of these papers are annexed to this report.

“The President of the Company on this occasion begs leave to remark, that in making up the opinion which he was called upon to give, as well from the tenor of the letter of the chairman of the committee, as from a knowledge that the Legislature was about to rise, there being no time allowed to consult the stockholders or even to call a Board of Directors at that inclement season of the year, he was compelled to act on his own judgment, and he humbly trusts that the opinion he has thus given, and the plan he has ventured to suggest, may be received by the Stockholders, as arising from the proper motives and the best consideration he was able on such short

notice to give the subject. At any rate it will be perceived that in the manner these were given, they can in no way commit the Company.

“The commissioners appointed by the states of Virginia and Maryland to perform certain duties having relation to the navigation of the Potomac and the affairs of the Company, as stated in the report made by the Board of Directors to the last general meeting of the Stockholders, did not convene during the last year owing as was understood to some informality in the proceedings of one of the states, leading to their appointment.

“They held their first meeting in the beginning of last month at Georgetown and after a session of a few days adjourned to meet about the middle of that month at Cumberland, for the purpose of entering on the examination of the state of navigation of the river, and of the works of the Company, in which examination, attended by the principal engineer of the Board of works of Virginia, it is believed they are now engaged.

“During the late session of the commissioners in George Town, in compliance with the instructions of the Stockholders, documents and papers from the office of the Company, were furnished them, giving information on all the points relative to which it was required; which information is now preparing to be handed them in an official communication and particular form at their request.

“The farther improvement of the Potomac river was brought to the view of Congress at the last session by several reports of committees, the most important of which was from the committee of the District of Columbia made on sundry memorials of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia praying the aid of the Federal Government toward that object. This lengthy and luminous document has been recently published.—The President and Directors think it proper to call the attention of the general meeting to it and particularly to that part of it, in which it is proposed to engraft, by means of the necessary alterations in the charter, a new Company on the present one, and to supercede the use of the

natural bed of the river, by a resort to a navigable canal from tide water to Cumberland.

“The President and Directors before concluding this report beg leave to congratulate the Stockholders on the many evidences lately given of the interest in the completion of this navigation which has been excited as well in the Legislatures of the states of Virginia and Maryland as in Congress and the neighboring community, and which they can but hope will lead to a favorable result.

“(Signed)      J. MASON  
                     JONAH THOMPSON  
                     JNO. C. VOWELL”

And here the records of the Patowmack Company end. Whether no board meetings were after held, or whether the records were not preserved may not now be known. The subsequent proceedings of the company are given in the annual reports of the president and directors only. The last recorded order is for the payment of the usual pension to the blind laborer.

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF 1823.

“The President and Directors of the Potomac Company in this their annual report beg leave respectfully to state to the stockholders, That the works of the Company and the navigation of the river are in quite as good a state as usual of late years. The repairs to the locks at Great Falls, mentioned as requisite in the last annual report have been completed. At the Little Falls, the canal has been cleansed, the banks repaired and three pairs of new sluice gates inserted to great advantage, in preventing the accumulation of foreign matter in the canal. The canals at Seneca Falls and Harpers Ferry have also been rendered better capable of navigation by repairs and removing the loose stone from them. Some work has also been done in refitting the sluiceways and wing dams on different parts of the river.

“The exhibits from the Treasurer herewith submitted give a detailed view of the affairs of the Company. . . .

“The resolution of the stockholders passed at their last annual meeting in consequence of the application of the agent of the State of Maryland for payment of the debt due to that state, was communicated as directed to the agent; suit was it appears, notwithstanding, ordered by him, and the subject was about to be taken up by the legislature of Maryland, of which proceeding having been advised by a person then attending the legislature on the part of the Company and apprehending a course hostile to the interests of the Company, the President and Directors immediately forwarded a petition to that legislature, which was fortunately presented in time, and was the means of obtaining the farther indulgence to the Company. As a sequel to the information submitted to the stockholders at their meetings in February last, in relation to the proceedings of the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland, then in session, on the subject of the contemplated incorporation of a new company under certain stipulations with the existing company, for the purpose of cutting a canal to be supplied by the waters of the Potomac and its tributary streams from the highest practicable point in the North Branch to tide water, the President and Directors have to state, that in Virginia a law passed for the incorporation of a new company, the provisions of which will be seen by the printed act; and the circumstances of its connection with the existing company will be explained by the report of James M. Mason who attended the legislature of that state by appointment of the Board of Directors as agent of the Company.

“In Maryland after several weeks’ discussion and the measure having assumed in the committee of the whole of the House of Delegates the shape exhibited in the bill no. 57 after some of the provisions deemed by its friends most valuable had been stricken out by a vote of the House, the bill was withdrawn by the members in the Powtomack interest.

“Great interest has been excited in both states on this question of the improvement of the navigation of the upper Potomac by means of an independent canal, and there can be no doubt that it will be renewed at the next session of the

Maryland legislature and possibly in some shape in the Virginia legislature. It is plain from the communications had with the legislatures of those states at their last sessions, and from the nature of the case, that whenever it becomes a matter for legislation, the interests of this Company must be deeply involved.

“It will be seen by the report of the commissioners appointed by the two states to examine the affairs of the Patowmack Company, the state of the navigation of the river, &c. made last winter that they strongly intimate that a new company may be legally and equitably established by law to effect the proposed work, without any provision for, or remuneration to that Company or its creditors. Without undertaking here to combat this opinion which the President and Directors must regard as unfounded, they will only remark, that so far as the legislatures of the states concerned have acted, more liberal views of the subject have been taken.

“The President and Directors beg leave to call particular attention of the stockholders to this point, they can but consider it of great importance under the peculiar circumstances of the case, as well to the community as to the Company and its creditors, that measures should be taken to determine and to make known thro’ some channel to the legislature of Maryland and if necessary to that of Virginia, on what terms this Company will by agreement consent to surrender its charter, and inasmuch as its funds are exhausted and its debts pressing however it may have law and right on its side, the President and Directors beg leave to recommend that the conditions so proposed be of the most moderate and conciliatory nature.

“All of which is respectfully submitted.”

The submitted copy of the following valuable report with its various enclosures is not to be found. This is from the original draft by John Mason.

“August 2d, 1824.

“The President and Directors, to the stockholders of the Potomac Company, in general meeting assembled, respectfully report;—



“That since the last annual meeting nothing material as to the condition of the works on the river has occurred, no change of any importance has been made in them, and they have been kept at a small expense, in the usual repair.

“The documents furnished by the Treasurer of the Company herewith exhibited, and numbered from one to four, show in detail the present state of its affairs.

“No. 1 shows the number of boats and the tonnage that have been employed, the tolls received and the estimated value of the articles from which they were collected during the year ending on the first of Aug. 1824.

“No. 2 is a statement of the quantity and kinds of produce and manufactures transported from the upper country within the same period.

“No. 3 gives a particular account of the disbursements of money made in that year.

“No. 4 is a table of the debts of the Company in which is set forth the several sums due, to whom owing and the total amount as struck on the 1st. of Aug. 1824.

“A copy of the report as required by law made by the President and Directors to the Board of Works of the State of Virginia is also submitted.

“In their last annual report the President and Directors ventured to state an opinion that great interest had been excited in the neighboring community relative to the improvement of the navigation of the upper Potomac, by means of an independent canal. In this they have not been mistaken. In the month of November last, as no doubt is known to most of the stockholders, a number of highly respected citizens, regularly delegated from many of the counties of Virginia and Maryland, from Pennsylvania and from the District of Columbia, convened in the city of Washington; and being duly organized as a deliberative body, discussed for several days, with great zeal and ability, not only that branch of the subject but also the practicability and propriety of connecting the waters of the Ohio with those of the Potomac by a canal to be extended from the eastern base of the Alleghany across the mountain; the proceedings of this important convention



terminated in the passage of a number of appropriate resolutions, and the appointment of several standing committees to carry them into effect. A copy of these resolutions, together with the other proceedings of the convention, is now laid before this meeting. It will be observed that in more than one point of view they have an essential bearing on the interests of this Company.

“In consequence of petitions from the committees of the convention, acts were passed during the past winter, by the legislatures of both Virginia and Maryland, for incorporating a new company to make a navigable canal from the tide water of the Potomac in the District of Columbia to the mouth of Savage Creek, on the north branch of said river, and extending thence across the Alleghany mountains to some convenient point on the navigable waters of the Ohio or some of its tributary streams, nearly on the plan recommended by the convention. But as in as much as in the act of Maryland, certain qualifications were annexed to some of the provisions of that of Virginia which qualifications were not afterwards acted on by the legislature of Virginia, and since no assent (as required by the acts of Virginia and Maryland) has as yet been given by the legislature of Pennsylvania, or by the Congress of the United States to the provisions of these acts, both of them remain inoperative. By a reference to the said acts of Virginia and Maryland it will be found, that it is expressly provided, that they shall not take effect until the assent of the Potowmack Company shall have been formally signified, and it will be seen on what terms it is proposed that it shall surrender its rights to, and amalgamate its interests with, those of the new company; the stockholders will thus be enabled to determine how far it may be expedient at this time, to take order on the subject. The Board of Directors from all that has passed, can but believe that whatever course this matter may ultimately take, a fair and liberal provision will be made, as well for the direct interest of this Company, which has so long toiled for the good of the community, as for that of its creditors who have furnished money for the advancement of the object.

“The President and Directors take particular pleasure in remarking, as a strong evidence of the impetus which has been given by public opinion on this subject, that the President of the United States in his message to Congress at the commencement of last session, took occasion to mention, in approbatory terms, the convention of citizens which had then recently taken place to discuss the question of the Potomac and Ohio canals; and to call the attention of Congress to this among other objects of internal improvements, that the result was, that Congress in April last passed an act, authorizing the President to employ skilful engineers, and such of the officers of the corps of engineers and others whom he might cause to be detailed on that duty, to make the necessary surveys, plans and estimates of the routes of such roads and canals, as he might deem of national importance, in a commercial or military point of view, and that soon after the President designated, as the first object to be attended to, under this act, the route of the canals recommended by the convention and adopted by the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland as before stated, and he appointed a most able and efficient body of engineers, civil and military, who are now actually employed in exploring the summit level between the head waters of the Potomac and Ohio, and in tracing and taking the levels of their several tributaries, from which it is expected the projected canals may be fed.

“On all which, as leading to the consumation of the original views of this Company, the President and Directors beg leave to congratulate the stockholders, and to express a firm belief, that the day is not distant, when with the aid of the general government and of the government of the contiguous states, this great work will be undertaken.

“(Signed) J. MASON  
JONAH THOMPSON  
JNO. C. VOWELL”

On the 27th day of January, 1824, the legislature of Virginia passed an act incorporating the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company which should become law



*John Mason, President*

GEN. JOHN MASON, LAST PRESIDENT OF PATOWMACK COMPANY  
(From Portrait in Possession of Mrs. V. C. Dawson)



when assent should be given to its terms by Maryland, the Congress of the United States and by the stockholders of the Patowmack Company. Subscriptions to the new stock might be paid in Patowmack stock at par or in the duly authenticated claims of its creditors, provided that the certificates of stock shall not exceed in the whole amount the sum of \$311,111.11, nor the claims the sum of \$175,800.00.

At a special meeting of the stockholders on the 16th of May, 1825, assent was given to the propositions of Virginia.

#### ANNUAL REPORT OF 1825.

“To the Stockholders of the Potowmack Company, the President and Directors beg leave to report.

“That the last year the navigation in the several parts of the river has been kept in nearly its usual state, with very little expense, that latterly however, it has become somewhat obstructed by the partial falling of the walls of some of the canals, and by deposit of mud in others, as well as from decay on some of the lock gates, to remedy which and to make the necessary repairs, preparations are now making in order to take advantage of the present low water. It is believed the disbursements required to effect all that is wanting will not be considerable.

“The papers numbered one to five furnished by the Treasurer and annexed to this report are respectfully referred to, for the state of the Company’s affairs in detail. . . .

“In compliance with one of the resolutions of the stockholders passed at the general meeting held on the 16th of May last, as soon as the requisite papers could be prepared, the President of the Company transmitted to the Executives of Virginia and Maryland and Pennsylvania respectively and to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States authenticated copies of so much of the proceedings of that meeting as went to declare the full and free assent of the Potowmack Company to the act of the state of Virginia passed at the December session in the year 1823 entitled ‘An act incor-

porating the Chesapeake and Ohio Company' and as went toward providing for the surrender, at the proper time, of the charter of the Potowmack Company to the same Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, as will be more particularly seen by reference to the recorded copies of the several letters addressed to the Governors of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania and to the Secretary of the Treasury. In consequence of which communications on the part of the Company commissioners have been appointed by the President of the United States, by the executive of the state of Maryland and by the executive of the state of Virginia for causing books to be opened for receiving subscriptions to the capital stock of the company to be incorporated, as contemplated by the act of Virginia before recited and by the acts of Maryland and of the Congress of the United States connected therewith. From Pennsylvania nothing has been heard on the subject. . . .

"The resolution of the general meeting which required the President should give notice to the creditors of the Company of its determination to surrender its charter, and of the alternative given them in relation to their debts, by the proposed charter of the new company, and that he should furnish the creditors with the actual state and prospects of the Company, in order to enable them the better to judge as to the option reserved to them, &c. has been so far complied with as that the whole proceedings bearing on the question, authenticated by the certificate of the treasurer and clerk of the Company have been published in the newspapers. The action on the last part of that resolution has been postponed until by the settlements made at the close of the year just ending, a more accurate view could be given, to the creditors, of the state of the affairs of the Company and of its prospects.

"A copy of the last annual report made by the President and Directors (as required by law of the state of Virginia) to the Board of Works of that state, is annexed, for the information of the stockholders.

"The President and Directors ought not to close this report without bringing to the view of the stockholders, a very extraordinary occurrence which has recently taken place in



relation to the disposable funds of the Company by which they have been completely deprived, for the present year at least, of every dollar they had in hand. The transaction alluded to is the actual seizing upon and withholding from the treasurer, the whole amount of his deposits in one of the banks of this town by the officers of that institution, not only against all custom and propriety on such occasions, but against a positive agreement on that subject, as will be shown.

“In the month of March last a deposit was made in the Union Bank of this town under an express agreement with the officers of the bank which was from time to time increased until the sum was considerable. During the month of July a check was drawn for a part of the sum then there at his credit, by the treasurer, which having been refused, the case as it then stood was referred to Board of Directors, who directed that the entire balance lying in that bank belonging to the Company, should be withdrawn and deposited in the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Georgetown. A check was accordingly drawn on the same day—to wit, the 13th July ult. and presented for said balance which being refused, it was put into the hands of a notary public and being again refused to him on formal presentation it was protested. Whereupon by order of the Board a letter was addressed on July 18 by the Treasurer to the Board of Directors of the Union Bank remonstrating against the transaction and claiming their interference.

“No answer having been received from the Directors of that bank, and it having been understood that it had happened that a sufficient number of members had not since the date of that letter met to form a board, the President of the Company by instruction from the Board addressed on the 29th July a letter to the president of the Union Bank requesting him to call a special board to act upon the subject. Nothing has since been heard from him, and it is understood that a board has not been called.

“For a better understanding of the detail of this matter reference is prayed to the minute made by the treasurer on

the day book under date 31st March and 13th July and correspondence recorded.

“All of which is respectfully submitted

“(Signed) J. MASON, *Prest.*

“JNO. C. VOWELL, JONAH THOMPSON, C. O’NEIL, J. LAIRD.”

“ANNUAL REPORT OF 1826.

“The President and Directors beg leave respectfully to report:—

“That in order to keep up the navigation on the lower part of the river it became indispensably necessary since the last annual meeting to effect considerable repairs to the works at the Little Falls, the canal which had not been cleaned out for several years was during the last season cleaned out for its whole length, the wall at its entrance has been repaired and heightened, the boat course at its mouth cleaned of the rocks which obstructed the passage of boats, one of the tumbling dams has been made good from its foundation, and other necessary repairs have been completed. Also contracts have been made for the immediate erection of a new pair of upper gates and for the framing of other gates to be in readiness in case of accident or sudden dis-repair.

“At the Great Falls the lowermost pair of lock gates, the largest and most important of the works at that place have been replaced by a new pair of substantial materials and good workmanship. A new waste water sluice of stone masonry has been built, the entire canal cleaned out and the wing wall at the entrance has been repaired and heightened so as to afford eighteen inches more water in a low stage of the river than heretofore.

“The sluices and dams between the Great Falls and Seneca canal were repaired and rebuilt so far as the season would admit and the passage through Seneca canal has been considerably improved.

“The usual statements of the Treasurer of the Company are presented as part of this report and as exhibits of the affairs to the Company in detail, numbered 1 to 5. . . .

“In compliance with the resolution of the last annual meeting and under the advice of the counsel of the Company, measures were taken by the President and Directors to recover possession of the funds improperly withheld by the Union Bank, and after having made a formal demand of the deposit and restoration being refused, a suit was brought for its recovery and damages. About two months after this process was commenced intimations were indirectly made to the Board of Directors of the Company that if now applied for the Bank would restore the money. Whereupon the Treasurer was instructed to present two checks on the Bank, one for the amount of the principal withheld, viz. \$5989.79, and the other for the amount of the interest which had accrued as allowed by the act of Congress at the rate of 12% per annum, for the time that the money had been withheld; the check for the principal sum was paid, and that for the interest was refused. The suit is now prosecuted to recover that interest; the reception of which entire sum will not indemnify the Company for the loss sustained by the withholding of this money from it; which had been set apart for the purchase of the certificates of the Cumberland Bank of Allegheny for the purpose of discharging a debt due in that bank by some of the Company’s creditors, and which it was bound to reserve in virtue of a pledge made of certain tolls long ago received, the said certificates having so much appreciated in value before the Company could obtain the use of its money, as to require a much larger sum to effect the object in view.

“In the month of June application was made by the Chief of the Ordnance Department of the United States for permission to the superintendent of the Public Armory at Harpers Ferry to fix a lock gate in the canal of the Company, on the opposite side of the river, for the purpose of increasing in dry seasons the quantity of water in the canal leading to the Public works. This measure appearing to the Board to be one likely to prove beneficial to the United States without being injurious to the navigation if properly effected, permission was cheerfully given, on condition that a person should be kept at the gate at the expense of the United States, to

insure a free passage to boats at such times as the gate was to be used for the object in view; and that in the events of its being found, notwithstanding, an obstruction to the navigation, it should be removed. . . .

“As required by the laws of Virginia, the usual annual report of the state of the Company’s funds and of their works &c. was transmitted in December last to the Board of Public Works of that state. A copy of which is herewith presented.

“In relation to the contemplated amalgamation of the affairs of the Potowmack Company with those of the projected Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, nothing farther has been done, inasmuch as the commissioners, appointed under the several acts of Virginia, Maryland and of Congress for receiving subscriptions for stock in the last mentioned Company, have not as yet thought it prudent, under the circumstances of the case, to open books for that purpose.

“It will, in order to preserve the navigation of the river in a tolerable state for the ensuing season, be indispensable that provision be made for renewing most of the other gates at the Little Falls locks, and to rebuild many of the dams, sluices and wing walls on the upper part of the river, and particularly between Seneca Falls and Harpers Ferry. These are estimated to cost from \$1500 to \$1700. After the reservation of a sum sufficient for this object and for ordinary expenses, it will be perceived by the exhibits of the Treasurer that there will remain a balance of a few thousand dollars from the receipts of the last year, applicable to the claims of the creditors of the Company in such manner as the President and stockholders may deem proper to appropriate it.

“All of which is respectfully submitted by

“(Signed) J. MASON, *Prest. Po. Cy.*

JONAH THOMPSON

JNO. C. VOWELL

C. O’NEIL”

“ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1827.

“The President and Directors of the Patowmack Company, to the stockholders in general meeting.

“Respectfully report:—

“That, as anticipated by the Board of Directors in their last annual communication to the general meeting, it has been found that much work was required to be done for the then ensuing season, in order to preserve the navigation, in repairing the locks on the canals at the Great and Little Falls, in rebuilding the dams, sluices and wing walls in the upper part of the river and in amending the courses.

“Advantage was taken of the low stage of the water in the latter part of last summer, and in the fall to execute these works to a considerable amount from Harpers Ferry to the head of Seneca and thence to tide water, but the approach of winter rendered the days too short to work with effect, and the rise in the waters rendered it necessary to desist from farther operations. A portion therefore was not finally completed. What was done however has so far improved the navigation as to admit of the transport of ten barrels more of flour in the same stage of water. Some repairs were also done between the mouth of Opecon (?) and Williamsport, and between the mouth of South Branch and Cumberland. Much however yet remains to be done, both on the river and at Great and Little Falls; at the latter places, a competent force under the direction of skilful workmen and judicious superintendence is now in train of executing such repairs as are essential there. At the Great Falls careful examination of the works displayed the imperious necessity of replacing many of the timbers attached and forming part of the locks which were in a state of natural decay, and in pulling down and rebuilding from the foundation, the masonry of some of the locks which were in a state of dilapidation from the imperfection originally in the mode of facing them with hewn stone. At the Little Falls a pair of new gates (the upper ones) have been inserted, and skilful carpenters are employed in framing new gates for the remaining locks, for which the materials are principally provided and are on the ground, in order for insertion whenever required.

“The Treasurer of the Company has by order of the Board made two visits of inspection and examination to various parts



of the river above the Great Falls, and has ascertained the state of the Company's works, their condition and that of the navigation and has made on each occasion a separate and detailed report which are herewith submitted. After his first tour of inspection and upon his recommendation as to the mode of executing the work, permission has been granted by the Board to Isaac Mc.Pherson to erect a dam and mill on the Monocacy a few miles above its junction with the Patowmack, and to Dr. Henry Boteler of Shepherdstown the same privilege has been granted for the building of a dam and mill on the Patowmack upon conditions and stipulations which, when complied with, will afford sufficient security for the preservation of the navigation and for its improvement, at the same time offering great prospect of an increase, to a considerable amount, of tolls. The mill on the Monocacy, so encouraged, has been completed and has already furnished a considerable addition to the produce which has passed through the locks from that part of the country. That near Shepherdstown is progressing rapidly to completion.

“Within the last few years the supply of certain articles, particularly of coal, lumber and timber from the upper part of the Patowmack to intermediate points on its banks above Great Falls, has been gradually increasing, and latterly, as was believed, became an object sufficient to merit the attention of the Board of Directors, and to authorize the expense of establishing collections of tolls at such places on the upper river as were designated by the laws of the two states from whom the Company derives its charter. Accordingly since the last general meeting of the stockholders, collectors have been appointed at Williamsport, Shepherdstown and Harpers Ferry, at which places considerable tolls have already been collected and when the requisite arrangements, as to these, shall have been completed, there is good reason to expect that a handsome increase of revenue may be derived from them.

“The suit prosecuted against the Union Bank of George Town for damages because of its withholding certain funds of the Company, as stated in the last annual report, has termi-



nated in a judgment in favor of the Company to the amount of the damages claimed by it.

“The Cumberland loan, so called and more particularly mentioned in former reports, as having under a special pledge a claim on the Company to priority of payment, has been now fully discharged, both principal and interest, and all the surplus funds arising from the tolls of the year just closed have been appropriated for the purpose of extinguishing a part of the loan of twenty-six thousand dollars made by certain banks in the District who were next entitled by special pledge to priority of payment, as will be shown in detail in the reports of the Treasurer herewith submitted.

. . . . .

“The commissioners appointed under the acts of Virginia, Maryland and of Congress for receiving subscriptions to stock in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, not having as yet opened their books, nothing farther has been done, as regards the corporate act of the Patowmack Company of the 16th May 1825, assenting to the provisions of the above mentioned acts incorporating that Company.

“All of which is respectfully submitted.

“(Signed) J. MASON, JONAH THOMPSON, C. O’NEIL, JNO. C. VOWELL.”

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1828.

“TO THE STOCKHOLDERS OF THE PATOWMACK COMPANY IN GENERAL ANNUAL MEETING ASSEMBLED;

“The President and Directors Respectfully report;—

“That in addition to the repairs and improvement stated in the last annual report to have been made on the different locks, canals and other works in various parts of the river, three of the locks at the Great Falls have of necessity and at considerable expense undergone a thorough repair in the stone work, two of them having been rebuilt from the ground, and a large portion of no. 3 lock been replaced from the foundation. A considerable expenditure was also made in repairs of the gates and other works requiring carpenter’s assistance. At the Little Falls a considerable portion of the canal has been

cleaned out, one of the tumbling dams has been rebuilt with stone from its foundation, and three pairs of new gates framed of first rate timber have been inserted to replace others which from long and the natural decay incident to works of that kind, had become unsafe longer to be trusted to. Timber for a fourth pair has been also provided and is on the spot and partly framed for the purpose.

“On the Monocacy the navigation has been made good from its mouth to Mc.Pherson’s mill and store, particularly referred to in the last report, a distance of nearly five miles, and there is no doubt the tolls already received, and to be received from the produce manufactured at that establishment will soon reimburse the cost of this improvement.

“At Paynes Falls below Harpers Ferry and at Stubbeville Falls below the Great Falls some permanent and advantageous improvements have been made.

“The differences existing with the Union Bank of Georgetown have been terminated, the officers of that bank having at length consented to a settlement in the mode directed by the stockholders of this Company, by dismissing the suits and discharging the judgments which the bank had obtained against the Company, and by consenting to receive from it, on account of the loan of \$26,000 of 1816 the same proportions with the other banks concerned in the loan; which has accordingly been carried into execution, and the judgment obtained by the Company against the said bank has been satisfied by it by a full payment of it with costs of suit, &c.

“The usual annual statements of the Treasurer of the Company displaying the monied and other concerns of the Company in the exhibits No. 1 to 5 are herewith submitted; They are 1st, A statement of the quantity and estimated value of produce and other articles transported on the Patowmack in the year ending 31st July 1828, with the tonnage employed in conveying the same and the tolls which have accrued therefrom.—

“2nd.—A general abstract showing the various kinds of produce and other articles transported during the said period.

“3rd.—A classified abstract of the disbursements made by the Treasurer for the year ending 31st July 1828.

“4th.—An account for the attendance of the President and Directors respectively on the business of the Company during their term of service just completed.

“5th.—A statement of the debts of the Company and of the interest thereon to the date of its assent to the acts of the several sates and of the Congress of the United States incorporating the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, and showing the farther interest to 31st July 1828.

“It will be perceived that since the last annual exhibit of the accounts of the Company payments have been made of

|                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| principal of debt to the amount of | \$7,322.83      |
| and of interest to the amount of   | <u>2,880.29</u> |
|                                    | 10,203.12       |

and that independent of the Lottery affairs, the debts of the Company now stand for principal and interest to 16th May 1825, the date of the assent before mentioned, at the sum of very nearly \$176,400.

“The annual report has been made to the Board of Public Works of the State of Virginia, as required by the law of that state and the same will be found recorded in the Journal of Proceedings of the Company.

“(Signed) J. MASON *Prest.*  
JONAH THOMPSON  
C. O’NEIL  
JNO. C. VOWELL”

On the 15th of August, 1828, the conveyance to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company was made, the deed being signed by J. Mason, Jonah Thompson, John Laird and Clement Smith, and the Patowmack Company passed into oblivion with its memories of heroic struggles and high ideals. Work had been commenced on the new enterprise July 4, 1826, when President Adams threw out the first spade of soil at High Island,

but the old works were used until 1830, when the locks at Great Falls were dismantled and abandoned. The canal at Little Falls was long used in its original state.

Only an occasional one of the many visitors to the beautiful Falls of the Potomac pauses to cast an inquiring glance at the remains of the long ditch-like excavation vanishing in the glade and the ruins of the stone laid sluice-way and mill as he passes. Rarely a student seeks the obscure path that, correctly followed, leads to the old commodious basin, now a cultivated field, past the tottering ruins of the once handsome home of the superintendent to the five locks farther down the wood, three of them faced with dressed brown stone from the quarries at Seneca, two of them blasted through the solid rock of a cleft between two towering peaks that stand as gigantic guards to this portal to the rushing current below. Peering into this forbidding gorge one realizes the full import of the old chronicler who wrote, "rarely an accident happens to boat or cargo."

Forest trees have pushed their roots down and the stone out, have insinuated themselves through from the inside and seemingly hang in midair from the walls and rise in groups and singly from the bed of the locks. Nature has full possession. Imagination fails to picture the old time scene of life and activity.

With the exception of Mount Vernon this spot is more intimately associated with Washington's everyday life than any other, yet there is nothing about the locality to call the attention of the tourist to the fact that the ground he treads has been hallowed by long and close association with the "Father of his Country," and that these ruins represent the first corporate attempt at inland improvement of waterways and for communication with the western country.

PRESIDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE PATOWMACK COMPANY.

| Virginia.                      | Maryland.                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Geo. Washington ..... 4 years. | Thos. Johnson ..... 4 years. |
| Jno. Fitzgerald ..... 3 years. | Tobias Lear ..... 2 years.   |
| James Keith ..... 9 years.     | Elie Williams ..... 2 years. |
| Chas. Simms ..... 8 years.     | John Mason ..... 11 years.   |

Thos. Johnson, Thos. Sim Lee, Geo. Gilpin, Jas. Fitzgerald, Notley Young, David Stuart, Wm. Deakins, Jr., Thos. Beall of George, Jas. Keith, Jno. Templeton, Tobias Lear, Philip Fendall, John Mason, Josias Clapham, Isaac McPherson, Francis Deakins, H. Dorsey, John Laird, Geo. Peter, Henry Foxall, Wm. Steuart, Josiah Thompson, Elie Williams, Jonah Thompson, Wm. Marbury, Jno. Vowell, C. O'Neil, Clement Smith.

Among the chairmen of the general annual meetings were Thos. Sim Lee, Jas. Fitzgerald, Gustavus Scott, Thompson Mason, Alex. White, Chas. Simms, Wm. Hartshorne, W. A. Worthington, Jno. Carroll, Philip B. Key, Dan. Carroll, Esq., Jas. Keith, Jno. Laird, Wm. Marbury, Benj. Stoddert, etc.

The treasurers were Wm. Hartshorne, Jos. Carleton, Jos. Brewer, Jas. Moore, Jr., and Robt. Barnard.

Note.—Since the above was written the members of the Fairfax County (Va.) Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution have placed a handsome bronze tablet at Great Falls in honor of George Washington the Citizen and of the Patowmack Company.

## APPENDIX A.

*Geo. Washington to Benjamin Harrison, Governor of Virginia.*

“MT. VERNON, 10 October, 1784.

“*Dear Sir*, Upon my return from the western country a few days ago, I had the pleasure to receive your favor of the 17th ultimo. It has always been my intention to pay my respects to you, before the chance of another *early and hard* winter should make a warm fireside too comfortable to be relinquished. And I shall feel an additional pleasure in offering this tribute to you, by having the company of the Marquis de Lafayette, when he shall have revisited this place from his eastern tour, now every day to be expected.

“I shall take the liberty now, my dear Sir, to suggest a matter, which would (if I am not too short-sighted a politician) mark your administration as an important era in the annals of this country, if it should be recommended by you and adopted by the Assembly.

“It has long been my decided opinion, that the shortest, easiest, and least expensive communication with the invaluable and extensive country back of us would be by one or both of the rivers of this State, which have their sources in the Apalachian mountains. Nor am I singular in this opinion. Evans, in his Map and Analysis of the Middle Colonies, which, considering the early period at which they were given to the public, are done with amazing exactness, and Hutchins since, in his Topographical Description of the western country, (a good part of which is from actual surveys,) are decidedly of the same sentiments; as indeed are all others, who have had opportunities, and have been at the pains, to investigate and consider the subject.

“But that this may not now stand as mere matter of opinion or assertion, unsupported by facts (such at least as the best maps now extant, compared with the oral testimony, which my



opportunities in the course of the war have enabled me to obtain), I shall give you the different routes and distances from Detroit, by which all the trade of the north-western parts of the united territory must pass; unless the Spaniards, contrary to their present policy, should engage part of it, or the British should attempt to force nature, by carrying the trade of the upper Lakes by the River Otawas into Canada, which I scarcely think they will or could effect. Taking Detroit then (which is putting ourselves in as unfavorable a point of view as we can be well placed, because it is upon the line of the British territory), as a point by which, as I have already observed, all that part of the trade must come, it appears from the statement enclosed, that the tide waters of this State are nearer to it by one hundred and sixty-eight miles than that of the River St. Lawrence; or than that of the Hudson at Albany, by one hundred and seventy-six miles.

“Maryland stands upon similar ground with Virginia. Pennsylvania, although the Susquehannah is an unfriendly water, much impeded, it is said, with rocks and rapids, and nowhere communicating with those, which lead to her capital, has it in contemplation to open a communication between Toby’s creek, which empties into the Allegany river ninety-five miles above Fort Pitt, and the west branch of Susquehannah, and to cut a canal between the waters of the latter and the Schuylkill; the expense of which is easier to be conceived, than estimated or described by me. A people however, who are possessed of the spirit of commerce, who see and who will pursue their advantages, may achieve almost anything. In the meantime, under the uncertainty of these undertakings, they are smoothing the roads and paving the ways for the trade of that western world. That New York will do the same as soon as the British garrisons are removed, which are at present insurmountable obstacles in *their* way, no person, who knows the temper, genius and policy of those people as well as I do, can harbor the smallest doubt.

“Thus much with respect to rival States. Let me now take a short view of our own; and, being aware of the objections which are in the way, I will, in order to contrast them, enumerate them with the advantages.

“The first and principal one is, the *unfortunate jealousy*, which ever has and it is to be feared ever will prevail, lest one part of the State should obtain an advantage over the other parts, (as if the benefits of trade were not diffusive and beneficial to all). Then follows a train of difficulties, namely, that our people are already heavily taxed; that we have no money; that the advantages of this trade are remote; that the most direct route for it is through other States, over which we have no control; that the routes over which we have control are as distant as either of those which lead to Philadelphia, Albany or Montreal; that a sufficient spirit of commerce does not pervade the citizens of this commonwealth; and that we are in fact doing for others, what they ought to do for themselves.

“Without going into the investigation of a question, which has employed the pens of able politicians, namely, whether trade with foreigners is an advantage or disadvantage to a country, this State, as a part of the confederated States, all of whom have the spirit of it very strongly working within them, must adopt it, or submit to the evils arising therefrom without receiving its benefits. Common policy, therefore, points clearly and strongly to the propriety of our enjoying all the advantages, which nature and our local situation afford us; and evinces clearly, that, unless this spirit could be totally eradicated in other States as well as in this, and every man be made to become either a cultivator of the land or a manufacturer of such articles as are prompted by necessity, such stimulus should be employed as will *force* this spirit, by showing to our countrymen the superior advantages we possess beyond others, and the importance of being upon a footing with our neighbors.

“If this is fair reasoning, it ought to follow as a consequence, that we should do our part towards opening the communication with the fur and peltry trade of the Lakes, and for the produce of the country which lies within, and which will, so soon as matters are settled with the Indians, and the terms on which Congress mean to dispose of the land, found to be favourable, be settled faster than any

other ever did, or any one would imagine. This, then, when considered in an interested point of view, is alone sufficient to excite our endeavors. But in my opinion there is a political consideration for so doing, which is of still greater importance.

“I need not remark to you, Sir, that the flanks and rear of the United States are possessed by other powers, and formidable ones too; nor how necessary it is to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of the Union together by indissoluble bonds, especially that part of it, which lies immediately west of us, with the middle States. For what ties, let me ask, should we have upon those people? How entirely unconnected with them shall we be, and what troubles may we not apprehend, if the Spaniards on their right, and Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing stumbling-blocks in their way, as they now do, should hold out lures for their trade and alliance? What, when they get strength, which will be sooner than most people conceive (from the emigration of foreigners, who will have no particular predilection towards us, as well as from the removal of our own citizens), will be the consequence of their having formed close connections with both or either of those powers, in a commercial way? It needs not, in my opinion, the gift of prophecy to foretell.

“The western settlers (I speak now from my own observation) stand as it were upon a pivot. The touch of a feather would turn them anyway. They have looked down the Mississippi, until the Spaniards, very impolitically I think for themselves, threw difficulties in their way; and they looked that way for no other reason, than because they could glide gently down the stream; without considering perhaps, the difficulties of the voyage back again, and the time necessary to perform it in; and because they have no other means of coming to us but by long land transportation and unimproved roads. These causes have hitherto checked the industry of the present settlers; for except the demand for provisions, occasioned by the increase of population, and a little flour, which the necessities of the Spaniards compel them to buy, they have no incitements to labor. But smoothe the road, and make easy the way for them, and then see what an influx of articles will

be poured upon us; how amazingly our exports will be increased by them, and how amply we shall be compensated for any trouble and expense we may encounter to effect it.

“A combination of circumstances makes the present conjuncture more favorable for Virginia, than for any other State in the Union, to fix these matters. The jealous and untoward disposition of the Spaniards on one hand, and the private views of some individuals, coinciding with the general policy of the Court of Great Britain on the other, to retain as long as possible the posts of Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego, &c., (which though done under the letter of the treaty is certainly an infraction of the spirit of it, and injurious to the Union,) may be improved to the greatest advantage by this State, if she would open the avenues to the trade of that country, and embrace the present moment to establish it. It only wants a beginning. The western inhabitants would do their part towards its execution. Weak as they are, they would meet us at least half way, rather than be driven into the arms of or be made dependent upon foreigners; which would eventually either bring on a separation of them from us, or a war between the United States and one or the other of those powers, most probably with the Spaniards.

“The preliminary steps to the attainment of this great object would be attended with very little expense, and might at the same time that it served to attract the attention of the western country, and to convince the wavering inhabitants of our disposition to connect ourselves with them, and to facilitate their commerce with us, be a means of removing those jealousies, which otherwise might take place among ourselves.

“These, in my opinion, are to appoint commissioners, who from their situation, integrity, and abilities, can be under no suspicion of prejudice or predilection to one part more than to another. Let these commissioners make actual surveys of James River and Potomac from tide water to their respective sources; note with great accuracy the kind of navigation and the obstructions in it, the difficulty and expense attending the removal of these obstructions, the distances from place to place through their whole extent, and the nearest and best portages

between these waters and the streams capable of improvement which run into the Ohio; traverse these in like manner to their junction with the Ohio, and with equal accuracy. The navigation of this river (*i. e.*, the Ohio) being well known, they will have less to do in the examination of it; but, nevertheless, let the courses and distances be taken to the mouth of the Muskingum, and up that river (notwithstanding it is in the ceded lands) to the carrying place to the Cayahoga; down the Cayahoga to Lake Erie; and thence to Detroit. Let them do the same with Big Beaver Creek, although part of it is in the State of Pennsylvania; and with the Scioto also. In a word, let the waters east and west of the Ohio, which invite our notice by their proximity, and by the ease with which land transportation may be had between them and the Lakes on one side, and the Rivers Potomac and James on the other, be explored, accurately delineated, and a correct and connected map of the whole be presented to the public. These things being done, I shall be mistaken if prejudice does not yield to facts, jealousy to candor, and, finally if reason and nature, thus aided, will not dictate what is right and proper to be done.

“In the mean while, if it should be thought that the lapse of time, which is necessary to effect this work, may be attended with injurious consequences, could not there be a sum of money granted towards opening the best, or, if it should be deemed more eligible, two of the nearest communications (one to the northward and another to the southward) with the settlements to the westward; and an act be passed, if there should not appear a manifest disposition in the Assembly to make it a public undertaking, to incorporate and encourage private adventurers, if any should associate and solicit the same, for the purpose of extending the navigation of the Potomac or James River; and, in the former case, to request the concurrence of Maryland in the measure? It will appear from my statement of the different routes (and, as far as my means of information have extended, I have done it with the utmost candor), that all the produce of the settlements about Fort Pitt can be brought to Alexandria by the Youghiogheny in



three hundred and four miles, whereof only thirty-one is land transportation; and by the Monongahela and Cheat Rivers in three hundred and sixty miles, twenty of which only are land carriage. Whereas the common road from Fort Pitt to Philadelphia is three hundred and twenty miles, all land transportation; or four hundred and seventy-six miles, if the Ohio, Toby's Creek, Susquehannah, and Schuylkill are made use of for this purpose. How much of this is by land I know not; but, from the nature of the country, it must be very considerable. How much the interest and feelings of people thus circumstanced would be engaged to promote it, requires no illustration.

“For my own part, I think it highly probable, that, upon the strictest scrutiny if the Falls of the Great Kanhawa can be made navigable, or a short portage be had there, it will be found of equal importance and convenience to improve the navigation of both the James and Potomac. The latter, I am fully persuaded, affords the nearest communication with the Lakes; but James River may be more convenient for all the settlers below the mouth of the Great Kanhawa, and for some distance perhaps above and west of it; for I have no expectation, that any part of the trade above the Falls of the Ohio will go down that river and the Mississippi, much less that the returns will ever come up them, unless our want of foresight and good management is the occasion of it. Or, upon trial, if it should be found that these rivers, from the before-mentioned Falls, will admit the descent of sea-vessels, in which case, and the navigations of the former's becoming free, it is probable that both vessels and cargoes will be carried to foreign markets and sold; but the returns for them will never in the natural course of things ascend the long and rapid current of that river, which with the Ohio to the Falls, in their meanderings, is little if any short of two thousand miles. Upon the whole, the object in my estimation is of vast commercial and political importance. In these lights I think posterity will consider it, and regret, (if our conduct should give them cause,) that the present favorable moment to secure so great a blessing for them was neglected.



“One thing more remains, which I had like to have forgot, and that is, the supposed difficulty of obtaining a passage through the State of Pennsylvania. How an application to its legislature would be relished, in the first instance, I will not undertake to decide; but of one thing I am almost certain, such an application would place that body in a very delicate situation. There is in the State of Pennsylvania at least one hundred thousand souls west of Laurel Hill, who are groaning under the inconveniences of a long land transportation. They are wishing, indeed they are looking, for the improvement and extension of inland navigation; and if this cannot be made easy for them to Philadelphia (at any rate it must be lengthy) they will seek a mart elsewhere; the consequences of which would be, that the State, though contrary to the interests of its seaports, must submit to the loss of so much of its trade, or hazard not only the loss of the trade but the loss of the settlement also; for an opposition on the part of government to the extension of water transportation, so consonant with the essential interests of a large body of people, or any extraordinary impositions upon the exports or imports to or from another State, would ultimately bring on a separation between its eastern and western settlements; towards which there is not wanting a disposition at this moment in that part of it beyond the mountains. I consider Rumsey’s discovery for working boats against stream, by mechanical powers (principally), as not only a very fortunate invention for these States in general, but as one of those circumstances, which have combined to render the present epoch favorable above all others for fixing, if we are disposed to avail ourselves of them, a large portion of the trade of the western country in the bosom of this State irrevocably.

“Long as this letter is, I intended to have written a fuller and more digested one, upon this important subject; but have met with so many interruptions since my return home, as to have almost precluded my writing at all. What I now give is crude; but if you are in sentiment with me, I have said enough; if there is not an accordance of opinion, I have said too much; and all I pray in the latter case is, that you will

do me the justice to believe my motives are pure, however erroneous my judgement may be in this matter, and that I am, with the most perfect esteem and friendship, Dear Sir, yours, &c.

Reply:

Nov. 13th.

“I was in great hopes of seeing you here before this, that I might acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 10th of last month in person, and tell you how much I approve of your plan for opening the navigation of the western waters. The letter was so much more explicit than I could be, that I took the liberty to lay it before the Assembly, who appear so impressed with the utility of the measure, that I dare say they will order the survey you propose immediately, and will at their next sitting proceed to carry the plan into execution.”

“5th January, 1785.

“TO MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX.

“*My dear Sir,*

“... In my last I informed you that I was endeavoring to stimulate my Countrymen to the extension of the inland navigation of our Rivers; and to the opening of the best and easiest communication for Land transportation between them and the Western Waters. I am just returned from Annapolis to which place I was requested to go by our Assembly (with my bosom friend Genl. Gates, who being at Richmond contrived to edge himself into the commission) for the purpose of arranging matters, and forming a Law which should be similar in both States, so far as it respected the river Potomack, which separates them. I met the most perfect accordance in that legislature; and the matter is now reported to ours, for its concurrence.”

“To do this will be a great political work—may be immensely extensive in a commercial point; and beyond all question, will be exceedingly beneficial for those who advance the money for the purpose of extending the Navigation of the

river, as the tolls arising therefrom are to be held in perpetuity and will increase every year."

"CHARLES COUNTY, MARYLAND

"TO GEORGE WASHINGTON ESQUIRE

"*Sir* I hereby authorize and request you as President of the Potomac Company to subscribe for me two shares to the before mentioned Copartnery, or to consider me (if consistent with the regulations of the Company) as an adventurer to the amount of two shares.

"I take the liberty to observe that I have long agoe earnestly desired the exhibition of the present Scheme, and would have subscribed forthwith, but that the Company's Books were kept at a considerable distance from my home, and I was not informed 'till lately that I could become a partner by letter signifying my consent. I hope I am not too late. And if I am considered as a Partner I hereby oblige myself, my heirs, executors and administrators to pay to the President and Directors of the Potomac Company, or to such persons as they shall authorize to receive the amount of two shares in the said Company in such manner as the President and Directors shall require. I am your Most Obedient.

"M. I. STONE

"June 3d, 1785."

From Gailliard Hunt, *Life and Writings of Jas. Madison*, Vol. 3, p. 182.

MADISON TO JEFFERSON, October 3, 1785.

"On my journey I called at Mount Vernon and had the pleasure of finding the General in perfect health. He had just returned from a trip up the Potomac. He grows more and more sanguine as he examines further into the practicality of opening its navigation. The subscriptions are completed within a few shares and the work is already begun at some of the lesser obstructions. It is overlooked by Rumsey, the inventor of the boats which I have in former letters mentioned to you. He has not yet disclosed his secret." Etc., etc.

“MT. VERNON, 10 November, 1785.

GENERAL WASHINGTON TO GEORGE WILLIAM FAIRFAX,

“*My Dear Sir;*

“... We have commenced our operations on the navigation of this river; and I am happy to inform you, that the difficulties rather vanish than increase as we proceed.—James river is under similar circumstances; and a cut between the waters of Albemarle in No. Carolina, and Elizabeth river in this State, is also in contemplation—and if the whole is effected, and I see nothing to prevent it, it will give the greatest and most advantageous inland Navigation to this Country of any in the Union; or I believe, in the world;—for as the Shenandoah, the South branch, Monocasy and Conogochague are equally capable of great improvement, they will no doubt be immediately attempted; and more than probable a communication by good roads will be opened with the waters to the westward of us; by means of the No. Branch of Potomac, which interlocks with the Cheat river and Yohogany (branches of the Monongahela) that empty into the Ohio at Fort Pitt.—The same is equally practicable between James River and the Greenbrier, a branch of the Great Kanhawa, which empties, 300 miles below that place; by means whereof the whole trade of that Territory which is now unfolding to our view, may be drawn into this State—equally productive of political as commercial advantages.”

“22 August, 1785.

TO WILLIAM GRAYSON (in Congress).

“We have got the Potomac navigation in hand. Workmen are employed under the best manager and assistants we could obtain, at the Falls of the Shenandoah and Seneca; and I am happy to inform you, that, upon a critical examination of them by the Directors, the manager, and myself, we are unanimously of opinion, that the difficulties at these two places do not exceed the expectations we had formed of them; and that the navigation through them might be effected without the aid of locks. How far we may have been deceived with respect to the first (as the water though low may yet fall), I

shall not decide; but we are not mistaken, I think, in our conjectures of the other."

TO HENRY LEE IN CONGRESS.

"MOUNT VERNON, 18 June, 1786.

*"My Dear Sir;*

"... The advantages with which the inland navigation of the Rivers James and Potomac are pregnant, must strike every mind that reasons upon the subject; but there is, I perceive, a diversity of sentiment respecting the benefits and the consequences, which may flow from the free and immediate use of the Mississippi. My opinion of this matter has been uniformly the same; and no light in which I have been able to consider the subject is likely to change it. It is, neither to relinquish nor to push our claim to this navigation, but in the mean while to open *all* the communications, which nature has afforded, between the Atlantic States and the western territory, and to encourage the use of them to the utmost. In my judgment it is a matter of very serious concern to the well-being of the former to make it the interest of the latter to trade with them; without which, the ties of consanguinity, which are weakening every day, will soon be no bond, and we shall be no more a few years hence to the inhabitants of that country, than the British and Spaniards are at this day; not so much, indeed, because commercial connexions, it is well known, lead to others, and united are difficult to be broken, and these must take place with the Spaniards, if the navigation of the Mississippi is opened.

"Clear I am, that it would be for the interest of the western settlers, as low down the Ohio as the Big Kanhawa, and back to the Lakes, to bring their produce through one of the channels I have named; but the way must be cleared, and made easy and obvious to them, or else the ease with which people glide down stream will give a different bias to their thinking and acting. Whenever the new States become so populous and so extended to the westward, as really to need it, there will be no power which can deprive them of the use of the



Mississippi. Why then should we prematurely urge a matter, which is displeasing and may produce disagreeable consequences, if it is our interest to let it sleep? It may require some management to quiet the restless and impetuous spirits of Kentucky, of whose conduct I am more apprehensive in this business, than I am of all the opposition that will be given by the Spaniards."

THOS. JEFFERSON TO GEN. WASHINGTON.

"PARIS, May 10, 1788.

"... I am now to acknowledge the honor of your two letters of Nov. 27 & Feb. 13, both of which have come to hand since my last to you of Dec. 4 & 5. The details you are so good as to give me on the subject of the navigation of the Potowmac & Ohio are very pleasing to me, as I consider the union of these two rivers as among the strongest links of connexion between the eastern & western sides of our confederacy. It will moreover add to the commerce of Virginia in particular all the upper parts of the Ohio & its waters. Another vast object & of much less difficulty is to add also all the country on the Lakes & their waters."

GEN. WASHINGTON TO THOS. JEFFERSON IN PARIS.

"MOUNT VERNON, 31 August, 1788.

"*Sir,*

"I was very much gratified a little time ago by the receipt of your letter dated the 2d of May. You have my best thanks for the political information contained in it, as well as for the satisfactory account of the canal of Languedoc. It gives me great pleasure to be made acquainted with the particulars of that stupendous work, though I do not expect to derive any but speculative advantages from it.

"When America will be able to embark in projects of such pecuniary extent, I know not; probably not for very many years to come; but it will be a good example, and not without its use, if we can carry our present undertakings happily into effect. Of this we have now the fairest prospect. Notwith-



standing the real scarcity of money, and the difficulty of collecting it, the laborers employed by the Potomac Company have made very great progress in removing the obstructions at the Shanandoah, Seneca, and Great Falls; insomuch that, if this summer had not proved unusually rainy, and if we could have had a favorable autumn, the navigation might have been sufficiently opened (though not completed) for boats to have passed from Fort Cumberland to within nine miles of a shipping port, by the first of January next. There remains now no doubt of the practicability of the plan, or that, upon the ulterior operations being performed, this will become the great avenue into the western country; a country which is now settling in an extraordinarily rapid manner, under uncommonly favorable circumstances, and which promises to afford a capacious asylum for the poor and persecuted of the earth."

"13 February, 1789.

"A desire of encouraging whatever is useful and economical seems now generally to prevail. Several capital artists in different branches have lately arrived in this country. A factory of glass is established upon a large scale on Monocacy River near Frederick Town in Maryland. I am informed it will this year produce glass of various kinds nearly to the amount of ten thousand pounds' value. This factory will be essentially benefited by having the navigation of the Potomac completely opened. But the total benefits of that navigation will not be confined to narrower limits than the extent of the whole western territory of the United States. . . . But I have lately received a correct draft, executed principally from actual surveys, of the country between the sources of the Potomac and those navigable waters that fall into the Ohio. Of this I enclose you such a rough sketch as my avocations would permit me to make; my principal object therein being to show, that the distance between the two waters is shorter, and that the means of communication are easier, than I had hitherto represented or imagined. I need not describe what and how extensive the rivers are, which will be thus in a wonderful manner connected, as soon as the Potomac shall

be rendered entirely passable. The passage would have been opened from Fort Cumberland to the Great Falls . . . before this time, . . . had it not been for the unfavorableness of the season. In spite of that untoward circumstance, I have the pleasure to inform you that two or three boats have actually arrived at the last named place."

From the will of George Washington, dated in 1799.

"Item;—I give and bequeath in perpetuity the fifty shares which I hold in the Potowmack Company (under the aforesaid acts of the legislature of Virginia) toward the endowment of a University to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia under the auspices of the general government, if that government should incline to extend a fostering hand towards it,—and until such seminary is established, and the funds arising on these shares shall be required for its support, my farther will and desire is that the profit accruing therefrom shall whenever the dividends are made be laid out in purchasing stock in the Bank of Columbia, or some other Bank, at the discretion of my executors, or by the Treasurer of the United States for the time being under the direction of Congress, provided that Honorable body should *patronize* the measure. And the dividends proceeding from the purchase of said stock is to be vested in more stock and so on until a sum adequate to the accomplishment of the object is obtained of which I have not the smallest doubt before many years pass away, even if no aid or *encouragement* is given by legislative authority, or from any other source."

## APPENDIX B.

*Call from the President and Directors of the Patowmack Company, dated Great Falls, July 2, 1799.—*

“Entrusted as we are with the interests of the Potowmack Company we deem it a duty incumbent on us, at this time, to give you, as a Stockholder, as general a view of those interests as the short compass of a letter will admit of.

“It is known to you, that the Capital of the Company at first consisted of five hundred shares of the value of £100 sterling each, since which an additional one hundred shares has been created by the Stock holders, rated at £130 sterling, the whole of which, except some inconsiderable balances owing by insolvent characters, has been collected.

“These sums have been expended in improving the navigation of the River from Georges Creek, twenty-eight miles above Fort Cumberland, and two hundred and eighteen above tide water, into tide water; which at this time, is in such a state, that at certain seasons, boats loaded with an hundred barrels of flour and upwards, can safely navigate that whole extent, except five hundred feet at the Great Falls.

“The difficulty and expence have proved much greater than at first contemplated; at Shenandoah and Seneca Falls, extensive Canals have been formed by which boats are enabled to avoid the rocks and sudden descents in the bed of the river; At the Great and Little Falls similar canals have been constructed—but at those places, it has been found that Locks were indispensable; At the Little Falls three have been made, through which boats from the foot of the Great Falls pass with the greatest ease and safety into tide water; At the Great Falls one lock has been formed—four more are requisite; the seat of one of those is nearly excavated; To aid the intercourse till the work is completed at this place, a machine is constructed to pass articles from the waters above, to the waters below, which is found to answer extremely well; but the experience of two years has convinced us, that so long as

any obstacle remains to a free passage into tide water, the navigation will not prove so serviceable to the public, or beneficial to the proprietors, as has been generally expected and now certainly known it will prove to be, when those are wholly removed.

“Independent of those four principal falls, comprizing altogether 224 feet, 9 inches, there is, from the head of the Shenandoah Falls, fifty five miles above tide water, to Georges Creek, a continued succession of smaller Falls and Ripples, forming in the aggregate, a fall of 874 feet 4 inches, these have been so far removed and improved upon, that boats safely pass them.

“In the execution of these works, the whole stock of the Company has been expended, except twenty-nine shares.

“From the best and most accurate estimates that have been formed, it is supposed that the cost of the remaining work at the Great Falls will not exceed \$60,000, and that it may be effected in the course of twelve months from the time funds are provided. . . .

“Having had recourse to every measure suggested to raise money by, without effect, fully informed of the heavy advances made by the stock-holders, seeing those advances wholly unproductive, and knowing they will remain so until the work is wholly executed, (the absolute necessity of doing this must be apparent to every person interested), the Board of Directors, to raise the necessary funds for that purpose, take the liberty of suggesting the only measure, which to them, seems to hold out a prospect of success,—that is for the stock-holders to make a further advance upon each share of the stock, subject to the same regulations the original subscriptions were; \$100 upon each share will raise the sum supposed sufficient for the purpose. As this advance must be a voluntary act, the assent of each stock-holder must be procured to carry the same into effect. Should a considerable majority of the Stock-holders approve of the measure, and others refuse to accede to it, provision will be applied for, and no doubt granted by the legislatures to make those stock-holders making additional advances to draw from the tolls in proportion to those advances.

I am, dear Sir,  
respectfully  
your friend  
O. J. Sears.

George Gilpin Esq  
John D. S. Esq

Your Ob<sup>d</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>  
Will Decker Junr

John Aug<sup>r</sup> Washington

James Remsey

Wm Hantshorne

I am Sir  
Your most obed<sup>t</sup>  
humble Serv<sup>t</sup>  
J. Widout





“It is requested you will communicate your sentiments upon this proposition so as to be laid before the stock-holders at their annual meeting to be held at the Union Tavern in Georgetown on the first Monday in August next.—Also that you give your personal attendance at that time if convenient, if not, that you, without fail, appoint a proxy to represent you with full power to act upon this proposition.

“(Signed). JOHN KEITH, *Pres.*, JOHN MASON, JOSIAS CLAPHAM, ISAAC MCPHERSON, DANIEL CARROLL OF DUDDINGTON, *Directors.*”

## APPENDIX C.

### FROM THE REPLY OF THE POTOMAC COMPANY TO QUESTIONS PROPOUNDED BY THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

GEORGE TOWN, JANUARY 20, 1808.

“1st. Points united by canal, and their distance;  
On the main Potomac in descending,—the first canal is conducted on the right bank of the river and unites the points immediately above and below Houses Falls (immediately above Harper’s Ferry), 50 yards.

“Second canal is conducted on the left bank round the Shenandoah Falls (immediately above Harper’s), distance, 1750 yards.—

“Third canal on the right bank around Seneca Falls (eight miles above Great Falls), 1320 yards.

“Fourth canal on the right bank unites the points immediately above and below the Great Falls, including a basin and five locks, 1200 yards.

“Fifth canal on the left bank unites the point immediately above the Little Falls and tide water including three locks, 3814 yards.

On the Shenandoah in descending;—

“First canal on the left bank round Little’s Falls (eight miles above junction with the Potomac), including a basin and one lock, 180 yards.

“Second on the left bank around Wilson’s upper falls including one lock, 730 yards.

“Third canal on left bank around Bull’s Falls, including a chute, 300 yards.

“Fourth canal on left bank around Wilson’s lower Falls including one lock, 600 yards.

“Fifth canal on left bank around Saw Mill Falls, including two locks, 580 yards.

“There are a number of small canals and cuts which draw off the water of the river partially in different places not enumerated.

“2nd. Difference of levels in canals;—

“At Houses, 3 feet, at Shenandoah, 15 feet,—at Seneca, 7 feet,—at Great Falls,  $76\frac{9}{12}$  feet,—at Little Falls,  $37\frac{1}{2}$  feet,—on the Shenandoah, first  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet, second,  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet,—third, 4 feet,—fourth,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet,—sixth, 7 feet.

“3rd. Number and description of locks;—

“On the Potomac and Shenandoah there are thirteen locks and one basin in use and in good repair.

“The principal canals on the Potomac at Great and Little Falls are 6 feet deep, 25 feet broad at top and 20 feet at bottom, the others are from 16 to 20 feet broad and 4 to 5 feet deep. Burthen of the boats which navigate the rivers averages ten tons. Breadth of towing paths, where they are carried on walls, from 4 to 6 feet, when on the land from 8 to 10 feet.

“ . . . On all this vast extent of interior navigation, stretching in different directions thro’ a fertile and well cultivated country the greatest obstructions and difficulties have been surmounted—to wit—the conducting by canals and locking the water round the principal falls and reducing to a regularly inclined plane by canals the water round the lesser falls.

“Much has been done from Savage River to tide water on the Potomac and for 60 miles on the Shenandoah, 40 miles on the Monocacy, and near the mouth of the Conogocheague the stream has been cleared of obstacles. On all these the beds of the rivers remain to be improved, and it is proper to say, that in many places where much labor has already been expended to improve the bed of the river considerable work yet remains to be done to make it well capable of navigation in times of low water. The locking and canals are every where executed, unless it may be found at a future day that at the Shenandoah Falls on the Potomac one or two locks would be useful, as the fall in the canal at that place is considerable, and to ascending boats, presents some difficulty.

“On the Shenandoah, a river remarkably well suited to

navigation, as from its mouth to Port Republic (200 miles) it preserves nearly an equal width, and the fall for this whole extent is estimated to be not more than 455 feet. . . .

“On the Potomac as the fall is more considerable, a perfect improvement of the bed of the river will be more difficult. By actual survey and admeasurement made in the year 1789 by Col. Geo. Gilpin and Mr. Jas. Smith for the Potowmack Company from the mouth of Savage River to Cumberland (30 miles) the fall was found to be 445 feet, and from Cumberland to tide water (187 miles) 715 feet.

“Many errors of minor importance were no doubt made in the commencement and prosecution of this great work and not a little money was lost for the want of the necessary knowledge (practical) in its early stages as it was the first work of the kind undertaken in this part of the country—most of these however were gradually remedied by experience, and it is believed that no material defect remains to be cured, but in two instances—the first, in the construction of four of the locks—three of these were constructed of an improper material—*wood*, and all the four made larger than requisite, thereby, not only having gone to a greater expense in the construction than necessary, but being constantly taxed with a loss of time and water in filling them. The three locks at the Little Falls of the Potomac were the first constructed, they were made 18 feet wide and of wood, the next which was finished was the upper lock at the Great Falls—this was made 14 feet wide. A little farther experience satisfied the Directors of the Company that the width of 12 feet was sufficient for any vessels that would navigate the river, and so were formed all that followed. The remedy in this case as to the upper lock at Great Falls, was soon applied, its greater capacity aided by an adjoining basin, was made to serve to fill more readily the lower locks, At Little Falls . . . it is proposed when the wood decays to rebuild of granite (of which there is a quarry of excellent quality on the canal just above, belonging to the Company, reserved for the purpose.) and then to contract them to 12 feet in width.

“In the next instance it is now thought that in the labor applied to the bed of the river too much has been done in removing rocks and that obstructions to the passing off of the water have sometimes been mistaken for obstructions to navigation.

“It is proposed in such places as will admit of that mode of improvement to erect a series of small cheap dams across the river thereby to back the water from station to station and to leave such falls generally as a boat’s crew will readily push, or haul up against, in ascending, and as will not be dangerous in descending. It is also believed that in the progress of the improvement of the bed of the river, it will be found best in many places to cut additional small canals on either side thro’ the land round the more considerable obstacles.

“There are at this time navigating the Potomac and Shenandoah boats equal in burthen to about 800 tons, but it is to be remarked that the last season having been the first that the Shenandoah was open there were then no boats on that river, a few only were built during that year, many are now preparing, and it is estimated that for the next season the tonnage will amount to at least 1200 tons. . . .

“The expense of carriage by the river above tide water compared with land carriage rated on a barrel of flour and taken from three principal points; Cumberland, Williamsport and Harper’s Ferry stand as nearly as may be, thus;—From Cumberland by land, \$2.25, by water, including tolls, \$1.30—from Williamsport by land, \$1.50, by water, including tolls, \$1.00. from Harper’s Ferry the same. It is to be observed however that the rates by water are too high at this time and that there are fewer boats now on the river than are requisite for the business, that when their number shall be increased and the bed of the river be farther improved, the carriage by water will be reduced from 33 to 50%.

“In navigating from Savage River to tide water there are employed three to four days, from tide water to Savage River six to seven days—from Harper’s Ferry one and a half days from tide water to Harper’s Ferry three to three and a half days.

“On the Potomac at the lower extremity of the canals at the Great Falls are five locks; Dimensions—one, length 100 feet, width 14 feet, lift 10 feet, contents 18,200 cubic feet—construction, rectangular, walled with hewn free stone, sluice gates discharge thro’ the larger gates,—one, length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 16 feet, contents 22,800 cubic feet, construction rectangular of hewn stone, sluice gates as before described,—one, length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 14 feet, contents 20,400 cubic feet, construction as the last,—two, length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 18 feet, contents 25,200 cubic feet each, construction rectangular, blown out of the solid rock, the natural rock worked tolerably smooth forming the sides, some mason work being used where the fixtures are inserted for supporting the gates, the sluice gates in these locks as in several of the others that are deep, do not lift but are made of cast iron and turn on a pivot fixed in the center, so that when the sluice is open this little gate or stopper is turned edgewise to the stream, they work very easy and are managed in deep locks much more readily than those of the ordinary construction.

“At tide water, at the canal at the Little Falls, three—dimensions—length 100 feet, width 18 feet, lift 11 feet, contents 23,400 cubic feet each, construction of wood, rectangular—sluice gates discharge as described for those at Great Falls.

“On the Shenandoah at Little Falls, one lock length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 8 feet, contents 13,200 cubic feet, construction—walled with granite and free stone near the gates, rectangular, sluices discharged thro’ the principal gates, and one basin immediately above and adjoining the lock, elliptic, 130 feet from gate to gate, and 150 feet across, lift two feet, the upper gate serving as a guard gate, walled as the lock.

“At Wilson’s Upper Falls one lock length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 12 feet, contents, 18,000 cubic feet—construction as the last.

“At Wilson’s Lower Falls, one, length 100 feet, width 12 feet, lift 6 feet, contents 10,800 cubic feet, construction as the last. At Saw Mill Falls, two, one length 100 feet, width



12 feet, lift 9 feet, contents 14,400 cubic feet, the other same length and width, lift 8 feet, contents 13,200 cubic feet, construction of these same as the last described.

“The natural or improved bed of the main Potomac River and of its branches, the Shenandoah, the Conogocheague, and the Monocacy are now used, except such parts of the Potomac and Shenandoah as are intersected by the canals already described, that is to say;—

“Of the Potomac from Savage River to tide water, from actual measurement, 218 miles 350 yards, Shenandoah 200 miles, Monocacy 40 miles, Conogocheague, 14 miles.

“The sum already expended in this work (commenced in 1784) including interest on loans amounts at this time to \$444,648.89

“The capital stock is composed of 500 shares created by the original incorporating acts of Virginia and Maryland in 1784—100 shares created in 1796—130 shares created in 1798—total 730, 29 of which have been bought in from delinquent subscribers, equal to \$311,555  $\frac{5}{8}$ . The state of Maryland holds 220 shares, Virginia 70, also 50 shares presented by the State to Gen. Washington and by him bequeathed towards the endowment of an university to be established within the limits of the District of Columbia. Individuals hold 361 shares of stock.

“As to capital wanted for completing the work, it is estimated by the Board of Directors that the sum of \$100,000 may be required, in addition to what has been expended, effectually to render navigation possible in times of the lowest water from all the points enumerated to tide water.

“The gross amount of tolls received has been, \$49,274 since August 1800.”

(For the balance of the report see accounts of incorporation of the Company.)

## APPENDIX D.

“TREASURY OFFICE, December 7th, 1818.

“THE HONORABLE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
“*Gentlemen,*

“I HAVE The honor to transmit herewith, a communication, with the statements accompanying it, received from John Mason, Esquire, relative to the proceedings of the Potomac company, and the debt due to the state.

“I also transmit a statement of the state’s claim against said company, in consequence of a loan made to them, on the face of which it will be seen that the whole principal sum, with two years interest thereon, will be due on the first of January next. It therefore remains with the legislature to determine, whether a further time for payment shall be given, or to direct such procedure as they in their wisdom shall devise, to enforce the collection of said claim.

“*Gentlemen,*

“I have the honor to be,

“With great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“B. HARWOOD, *Tr. W. S. M’d.*”

“GEORGE-TOWN, July 30th, 1818.

“*Sir,*

“THE Letter which was addressed by you on the 19th March last, to Mr. Brewer, Treasurer of the Potomac company, in relation to the debt due by the company to the state of Maryland, was submitted to the first board of directors held after its reception, and would have been sooner replied to, but that I was desirous in compliance with the views of the board, of being able at the same time, to communicate the amount of the receipts of the present year ending on the first Monday of next month; the accounts for which are but just made up.

“I have now the honor to transmit to you an order of the

board on the subject of your letter, together with the extracts from the communication made in December last to the board of public works in Virginia, directed by the order, and marked A, and B, and a paper marked C, being an appendix to the table B, in which last paper is shown, from the commencement of the operations of the company in 1799, to the 1st of August 1817, the annual amount of tolls received, the tonnage employed, and the produce and merchandise transported, and the estimated value of the same. The paper C, gives the same results for the year ending on the first of August, 1818.

“You will perceive, Sir, by the last mentioned paper, that the tolls received that year have amounted to little more than ten thousand dollars; more than half of which amount has been expended in addition to the last loan from the banks, in finishing the new set of stone locks at the little falls, (which by great exertion were put in operation at the commencement of the present season), and the necessary current expenses and repairs. The sum above mentioned taken up from the banks on a particular pledge, was fifteen thousand dollars; and there had been previously borrowed of them for the same purpose, twenty six thousand dollars. For the sum first borrowed, however, it is hoped they would consent to wait longer for the reimbursement.

“Under these peculiar circumstances, in consideration that the works of the company are now rendering essential benefits to all the country in the vicinity of the waters of the Potomac, and in the expectation that (this unlooked for and great expenditure in renewing the whole set of locks at the Little Falls being now made) the revenue of the company may enable it to discharge its debts within a reasonable time. The president and directors earnestly hope that the state of Maryland will not insist upon the immediate payment of the instalments of the debt due it.

“Very respectfully,

“I have the honor to be, Sir,

“Your most obedient servant,

“Benjamin Harwood, Esq.

“J. MASON.

“Treasurer of the state of Maryland.”

“(A.)

*Extract from a communication made on the 6th December, 1817, from the President and Directors of the Potomac Company, to the board of public works of the State of Virginia.*

“THE Extent of the navigation of the Potomac river and its branches under the control of the company, already improved, completely or partially, is of about two hundred and seventy-five miles, that is to say, on the main river, two hundred and twenty, on the Conogocheague, fifteen, and on the Monocosy, forty miles. The navigation of the Shanandoah Branch, is not noticed here, because the improvement of that river is now in the hands of another company. After expending a large sum of money, and having opened the navigation on it for a considerable extent, by means of canals, locks and other works, the Potomac company finding it not in their power to go on with its improvement for want of funds within any reasonable time, deemed it conducive to the interest of the community, and in all probability most to the ultimate advantage of the Potomac company, to dispose of these works at a considerable present sacrifice, that is, for greatly less than they cost, to a company associated for the purpose of improving that river, and which has been duly incorporated, and an agreement has been accordingly entered into to that effect, not yet finally ratified, but there is little doubt that it will be confirmed.

“The improvement for the extent before stated, has been effected by means of large canals, taken out of the river and locked round the principal falls, and reduced to regular inclined planes round the lesser falls, as at the great falls, where the difference of level is *seventy-six* feet nine inches, by a canal *six feet deep, twenty-five feet wide at the top, and twenty at bottom, twelve hundred yards long*, with five locks and a bason.

“At the lower or ‘Little Falls’ so called, by a canal of the same depth and width, *three thousand eight hundred and fourteen yards long*, with four locks, and a difference of level of thirty seven feet, and at the falls opposite the mouth of the

Shenandoah, by one *seventeen hundred and sixty yards* long, difference of level *fifteen feet*. At the Seneca Falls, by one *thirteen hundred and twenty yards* long, difference of level *seven feet*, and at House's Falls, by one of *fifty yards* long, difference of level *three feet*; the three last mentioned canals being without locks, from sixteen to twenty feet wide, and from four to five feet deep. And moreover, by much work executed on the bed of the river, by blowing and removing masses of rocks, by running wing walls to collect the water, by making cuts on its sides to draw the water partially from the river into a more secure and better channel, and by erecting cradels and chutes to pass boats. A considerable expenditure has also been made on the Antietam, but without as yet, any beneficial result from that branch of the river. Nothing has yet been done on the upper part of the Conogochegue, on Patterson's Creek, on the South Branch, on Cape Capeon, or on the Opecan; from all which branches there is no doubt considerable addition may be made to the general navigation of the river at a future day.

"The principal obstructions having been removed throughout the whole distance before stated as improved, the company had hoped that the calls on it for heavy expenditure were over, and that it might go on leisurely to ameliorate that part of the navigation, to open the remaining branches of the river, and to prepare for paying off existing debts without incurring new ones, when unfortunately about two years ago, the set of locks at the foot of the canal round the lower falls, which having been constructed of wood, gave way, and in such a manner that it became necessary to renew them entirely. It was determined as most conducive to the interest of the company, and most consistent with the object of the institution, to occupy a different scite for the locking of this place, and to construct the locks and their appendages, wholly of stone and solid mason work. These locks, four in number, and locking a fall of thirty seven feet with their guard walls, &c. have cost a heavy sum of money, and their erection has forced the company into a large and unexpected expenditure, and obliged it to contract new debts to provide for it; they



are however nearly compleated, and will be ready to pass boats at the commencement of the spring navigation.

“The total expenditure in improvements on this river made by the Potomac company, from the commencement of its operations in 1784 to this time, as nearly as can be ascertained, may be stated at six hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The aggregate amount of the debts due at this time by the company and admitted by it, including interest, is about 140,000 dollars, of which 89,700 dollars to banks, and 30,000 dollars to the State of Maryland, and about 20,500 dollars to individuals. There are moreover some claims disputed by the company, which if established may increase the sum to about 150,000 dollars. It will further require a sum of 10 or 12,000 dollars to be raised at the close of this season, to pay off the workmen and balances due for materials employed in constructing the locks at the Little Falls before described.

“The debts due to and from the company on account of the lottery authorised by the State of Maryland, yet unsettled, are not taken into view, as they are intended to settle each other; the result is however doubtful. This lottery concern has been unfortunate, and has not afforded the expected aid to the company, and may produce an ultimate loss.

“The only debt due to the company of any importance will be one from the Shenandoah company, for the purchase of the works on that river before mentioned, amounting to 15,000 dollars, when the agreement shall be ratified.

“The aggregate receipts from tolls commencing on the first of August 1799, to the first of August 1817, amounts to 162,379 dollars, the portion of which received in each year, as well as the quantity and kinds of produce on which it is levied, and the number of boats and the quantum of tonnage used in the transportation, and the estimated value of the produce and merchandise so transported, is particularly shewn in the table which is herewith transmitted.

“At the same time that the president and directors regret that the view which is here given of the monied concerns of the company is far from being agreeable, yet when the magnitude of the work in which it has been engaged is considered,



and it is recollected that in spite of all that can be done in such cases, many errors of construction, for want of the requisite practical knowledge, must have been committed, and many expenditures beyond ordinary calculations must have been made, in effecting a navigation on so extensive and rapid a stream presenting innumerable obstructions, in a difference of level, (as is the fact from the upper point of improvement to tide water,) of eleven hundred and sixty feet; in a country so new in undertakings of this nature, and particularly on inspection of the table annexed, when it is seen to what a mass of produce and merchandize this navigation is affording a cheap and easy transportation, and the great resources in tolls which must ultimately grow out of the increased population and cultivation of the extensive and fertile country pervaded by these waters are estimated, they can but hope, that the day is not very distant, when the company will be enabled to discharge the demands against it, and to remunerate its stockholders for the inactivity of a capital, to them so long unproductive, by handsome dividends of annual profit. At any rate, it will be readily perceived by the exhibit here presented, that the community have, for many years, profited to a great extent by the facility and saving in the expense of transportation offered by this navigation, which cannot now be estimated at less than fifty thousand dollars per annum, for the difference between land and water carriage on the articles conveyed to and from the upper country by way of the river, and that the company has constantly laboured to produce, in the first instance, these advantages to the community, since it has uniformly instructed the board of directors to apply the tolls received toward further improvements, except in a single instance, when, in the year 1802, a dividend at the rate of 5.55 dollars per share, amounting to the small sum of 3,890.55 dollars was made, and that it is the fact, that all the rest of the toll money received from time to time, amounting in the whole to 158,489.40 dollars has been so applied.”

*AT A meeting of the President and Directors of the Potomac Company, held in George-Town, 6th April, 1818, a letter of 19th March last, from B. Harwood, Esq. treasurer of the state of Maryland, in relation to the debts due by the company to that state, was submitted.*

*Ordered,* That the president write to the treasurer, and inform him the present state of the companies' funds and works, by transmitting him the substance of the communication made last fall to the board of works of Virginia, and what may have since occurred;—that he inform him of the necessity under which the board found itself, from the decay, and finally the falling in of the locks at the Little Falls, for the good of the whole, as well of the stockholders as the creditors, to take up from the banks a considerable sum of money to rebuild the locks at that place, in order to secure a continuance of the revenue by tolls, and to pledge an immediate return of the same out of the first monies received after the completion of the locks,—and that he express a hope, on the part of the board, that under these particular circumstances, the officers of the state will not insist that the directors provide for the instalment of the principal and the interest on the debt now due, until they can refund the money so taken up for the special purpose just mentioned.

[True copy,]

JOS. BREWER, *Tr. P. Co.*

(B.)

*A TABLE Shewing the amount of Tolls received by the Potomac Company in each year, from the 1st August, 1799, to the 1st August, 1817, together with the number of boats and tonnage employed, and the produce and merchandize transported, with the estimated value of the same during that period.*

| Years. | Boats. | Tonnage.    | Flour.  | Whiskey.   | Tobacco. | Iron.     | Articles of Produce Estimated. |      | Return Goods Estimated. |      | Amount of Tolls Received. |      | Total Estimated Value. |      |
|--------|--------|-------------|---------|------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------|------|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
|        |        |             |         |            |          |           | Dolls.                         | cts. | Dolls.                  | cts. | Dolls.                    | cts. | Dolls.                 | cts. |
| 1800   | 296    | 1,643       | 16,584  | 84         | 25       |           | 2,950                          |      | 7,851                   | 00   | 2,133                     | 58   | 129,414                | 00   |
| 1801   | 413    | 2,993       | 28,209  | 619 1-2    | 100      | 187 1-2   | 14,060                         |      | 6,180                   | 00   | 4,210                     | 19   | 328,445                | 32   |
| 2      | 305    | 1,952       | 17,250  | 379        | 5        | 238 1-2   | 27,233                         | 50   | 000                     | 00   | 3,479                     | 63   | 163,916                | 00   |
| 3      | 493    | 5,549       | 45,055  | 257        | 32       | 480 1-2   | 3,936                          | 00   | 10,386                  | 00   | 9,353                     | 93   | 345,472                | 82   |
| 4      | 426    | 3,823       | 39,350  | 578        | 8        | 88        | 3,250                          | 00   | 7,514                   | 00   | 7,665                     | 58   | 284,040                | 60   |
| 5      | 405    | 3,208       | 28,507  | 436        | 11       | 137       | 32,975                         | 18   | 7,486                   | 00   | 5,213                     | 24   | 340,334                | 18   |
| 6      | 203    | 1,226       | 19,079  | 459        | 5        | 20 1-2    | 3,553                          | 40   | 4,998                   | 00   | 2,123                     | 69   | 86,790                 | 40   |
| 7      | 573    | 8,155       | 85,248  | 971        | 20       | 35        | 11,796                         | 00   | 7,314                   | 00   | 15,080                    | 42   | 551,896                | 47   |
| 8      | 508    | 5,994       | 48,463  | 1,535      | 3        | 13        | 10,532                         | 47   | 7,613                   | 00   | 9,924                     | 27   | 337,007                | 47   |
| 9      | 603    | 6,767       | 40,039  | 1,527      | 37       | 494       | 8,537                          | 00   | 11,510                  | 00   | 9,094                     | 89   | 305,628                | 00   |
| 10     | 568    | 5,374       | 40,757  | 1,080      | 13       | 191 1-2   | 5,703                          | 00   | 000                     | 00   | 7,915                     | 85   | 318,237                | 62   |
| 11     | 1300   | 16,350      | 118,222 | 3,768      | 27       | 200       | 6,810                          | 00   | 6,000                   | 00   | 22,542                    | 89   | 925,074                | 80   |
| 12     | 613    | 9,214       | 55,829  | 3,143      | 6        | 360       | 1,694                          | 00   | 7,319                   | 75   | 11,471                    | 37   | 515,525                | 75   |
| 13     | 623    | 7,916       | 55,902  | 3,464      | 11       | 252       | 1,899                          | 00   | 6,119                   | 32   | 11,816                    | 22   | 423,340                | 32   |
| 14     | 596    | 5,987       | 38,769  | 2,684      | 18       | 361       | 675                            | 60   | 5,314                   | 12   | 9,109                     | 82   | 312,093                | 72   |
| 15     | 613    | 6,354       | 47,183  | 4,616      | 9        | 314       | 2,075                          | 00   | 5,211                   | 15   | 9,789                     | 57   | 489,498                | 15   |
| 16     | 550    | 6,132       | 35,918  | 1,774      | 29       | 419       | 9,291                          | 65   | 6,371                   | 35   | 7,501                     | 52   | 357,661                | 00   |
| 17     | 856    | 8,197       | 57,662  | 1,385      | 10       | 335       | 4,094                          | 00   | 14,000                  | 00   | 13,948                    | 23   | 787,994                | 00   |
|        |        | 106,834 1-2 | 818,026 | 28,759 1-2 | 369      | 4,126 1-2 | 151,065                        | 80   | 121,187                 | 69   | 162,379                   | 95   | 7,002,370              | 62   |

True Statement from the Books.

JOS. BREWER, Tr. P. Co.

(C.)

*A TABLE Shewing the amount of Tolls received by the Potomac Company from the 1st of August, 1817, to the 1st of August, 1818, together with the number of boats and tonnage employed, and the produce and merchandise transported, with the estimated value of same.*

| Year. | Boats. | Tonnage. | Flour. | Whiskey.  | To-<br>bacco.. | Iron.   | Other Articles<br>of Produce<br>Estimated. | Sundry<br>Return Goods<br>Estimated. | Amount of<br>Tolls Received. | Total Esti-<br>mated Value. |
|-------|--------|----------|--------|-----------|----------------|---------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1818  | 746    | 7,819    | 58,226 | 3,126 1-2 | 2              | 428 3-4 | Dolls. cts.<br>6,750                       | Dolls. cts.<br>8,200                 | Dolls. cts.<br>10,309 74     | Dolls. cts.<br>653,274 50   |

The above is a correct extract from the books.

JOS. BREWER, Tr. P. Co.

*Dr. The President and directors of the Potomac Company in account with the state of Maryland Cr.*

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Inter-<br>est. | Prin-<br>cipal. |                  |                                  | Inter-<br>est. | Prin-<br>cipal. |                   | Inter-<br>est. | Prin-<br>cipal. |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1814, March       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Dolls.         | Dolls.          |                  |                                  | Dolls.         | Dolls.          |                   | Dolls.         | Dolls.          |
| 9                 | To exchange six per cent. stock of the United States of 1812, for thirty thousand dollars of said stock, transferred to them on the 22d February, 1814, pursuant to the resolutions of November session 1812, and December session 1813, for which they have pledged the funds of the said company, and given bond in their corporate capacity, for the reimbursement of the principal in stock of the like nature with that loaned, by instalments of three, four and five years, with interest from the first day of January, 1814, upon the whole amount of principal remaining unpaid, such interest to be paid annually, and in money of the United States. |                |                 | 1815, January 13 | By cash for one year's interest  | 1,800          |                 | 1816, February 10 | By ditto ditto | 1,800           |
| 1815, January 13  | To interest account for 1 year, to 1st instant, ditto to 1st Jan. 1816,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 1,800          | 30,000          | 1817, July 3     | By ditto ditto                   | 1,800          |                 |                   | By ditto ditto |                 |
| 1816, February 10 | To ditto ditto to 1st Jan. 1817,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1,800          |                 |                  | By new account due for principal |                |                 |                   |                | 5,400           |
| 1817, July 3      | To ditto                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                | 5,400           |                  |                                  |                |                 |                   |                | 30,000          |
|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                | 35,400          |                  |                                  |                |                 |                   |                |                 |
|                   | To old account due for principal,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                | 30,000          |                  |                                  |                |                 |                   |                |                 |
|                   | To interest on 30,000 dollars from 1st January, 1817, to 1st January, 1819, two years, at 6 per cent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                | 3,600           |                  |                                  |                |                 |                   |                |                 |
|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                | 33,600          |                  |                                  |                |                 |                   |                |                 |

Treasury Office, December 7th, 1818.

B. HARWOOD, Tr. W. S. M'd.

## APPENDIX E.

“Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois and Upper Canada, 1795-6-7, by the Duke de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt,” London, 1799, page 334:

“An excursion that I made to the (Great) Falls gave me an opportunity of seeing the canals which are forming for the purpose of avoiding them (the falls) and are the undertaking of the Potowmack Company. The canal of the smaller falls is entirely finished; it is one and a half mile in length, four locks ten feet high placed at its upper extremity convey vessels down the river. The smaller falls are not strictly such, but the water is sufficiently checked and disturbed in its course to render the navigation impracticable and the noise it makes is considerable. Above the smaller falls at a place where the Potomac is confined to a narrow passage between mountains a bridge has been lately erected of the same kind (suspension) as the bridge of Merrymack near Newburyport in Massachusetts, the same architect was employed in both. The canal of the Great Falls is also finished excepting the locks which are to be ten in number. The height of the falls themselves is seventy-eight feet and the descent from the upper end of the canal to the lower end is about ninety feet. To make some use of the canal in its present state till the locks can be completed large masses of earth are left to check the rapidity of the water, vessels proceed to the places where these are and the barrels of flour and hogsheads of tobacco which are the principal articles brought down the river are rolled down an inclined plane made of wood (for this temporary use) to vessels that wait for them below. The Great Fall of the Potowmack is beautiful and deserves to be visited by all who arrive in this neighborhood.”

Page 315:



“A company has been incorporated by the states of Va. and Md. in 1784 by the name of the Potowmack Company with a grant of tolls on different canals they had undertaken. The adoption of establishing the General Government on the banks of the Potowmack gave new activity to those undertakings which had begun to languish. In 1795 the shares of this company which at its establishment amounted to five hundred at \$444 each were increased to six hundred and thus the company had the disposal of \$270,400 to improve the navigation of the Potowmack. The states of Va. and Md. were moreover particularly interested in the success of the company by being proprietors of a great number of shares. When the undertakings of this company shall be finished the produce of an immense extent of country which at present is conveyed by land to Philadelphia and Baltimore will find a more ample, ready and less expensive market through the means of this great river and Federal City will acquire new resources both for its consumption and commerce, adding greatly to the natural advantages of its situation.”

“Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, 1795-6-7,” by Isaac Weld, Jr. London, 1799. Page 37:

“Thus it appears that the Federal City is possessed of essential qualifications for making it a place of importance—that is a good harbour (Eastern Branch) from which there is a ready passage to the ocean; it will also appear that it is well situated for trading with the interior parts of the country. . . . The navigation of the Potowmack is safe to the Little Falls, six miles up, for river craft, here a canal which extends two and a half miles . . . has been cut and perfected which opens a fine passage of boats as far as Great Falls. . . . The descent of the river there is 76 feet in one and a quarter mile, but it is intended to make another canal here also; a part of it is already cut and every exertion is making to have the whole completed with expedition. From hence to Fort Cumberland, 191 miles above the Federal City there is a free navigation and boats are continually passing up and down.

Beyond this the passage in the river is obstructed, but there is a possibility of opening it and as soon as the Company formed for the purpose have sufficient funds it will certainly be done. . . . Thence to Cheat River is only 37 miles. . . . Things are only great or small by comparison and a portage of only 37 miles will be thought a very short one when found to be the only interruption to an inland navigation of upwards of 2700 miles of which 2187 are down stream (Mr. Weld traces the routes to Detroit and even far Winnepeg via this route)."

"General History of Inland Navigation, Foreign and Domestic." John Phillips. New edition. London, 1795. (Printed in 1793.) Page 352:

"Several improvements are carrying on in the States of Virginia. . . . The distance from the Capes of Virginia to the terminations of the tide-way in the river Potomak is about 300 miles and the river is navigable for ships of the greatest burthen to that place; from thence it is obstructed by four considerable falls and runs through a vast tract of inhabited country towards its source. These falls are 1st, The little falls three miles above tide-water,—2dly, The great falls, six miles higher, where is a fall of 76 feet in one and a quarter mile,—3dly, The Seneca falls 6 miles above the former which form short irregular rapids with a fall of about ten feet, and 4thly, The Shenandoah falls 60 miles from the Seneca which is a fall of about 30 feet in three miles, from which last Fort Cumberland is about 120 miles distant. The obstructions which are opposed to the navigation above and between these falls are of little consequence. Early in the year 1785 the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland passed acts to encourage opening the navigation of this river. It was estimated that the expense of the canals and other works would amount to £50,000 sterling and ten years was allowed for their completion. At present the president and directors of the incorporated company suppose that £45,000 will be sufficient for the undertaking, and that it will be accomplished in a shorter time than was estimated. Their calculations are

Isaiah  
Dennis Ramsay R. B. Rose

Sam. Farwell of Devon John: Tho: A. Boncher

A. Henderson

Mrs. Lyles

Nich. King

J. Smith

May 12<sup>th</sup> 1797

George Gilpin Seven Towne

John Fitzgerald

Robt Barnard  
Free Patboy

Wm. Young Abraham Phelps

Daniel Cowell Brant Gusts Scott

Thos Beale of Maine

George Scott



founded on the progress already made and the summary mode lately adopted for enforcing the collection of the dividends as the money may become necessary. On each share of £100 the payment of only £4 has yet been demanded. According to the opinion of the president and directors locks will be necessary at only two places, the great and the little falls; six at the former and three at the latter. At the latter place nothing has yet been attempted. At the great falls where the difficulties were judged by many to be insurmountable the work is nearly completed, except sinking the lock seats and inserting the frames. At the Seneca falls the laborious part of the business is entirely accomplished by removing the obstacles and graduating the descent so that nothing remains but to finish the channel for the general current in a workmanlike manner.

“At the Shenandoah where the river breaks through the Blue Ridge mountains though a prodigious quantity of labour has been bestowed yet much is still to be done before the passage will be completed. Such a progress has been made however that it was expected, if the summer had not proved uncommonly rainy and the river uncommonly high an avenue for a partial navigation would have been opened by the 1st. of January, 1789, from Fort Cumberland to the great falls which are within nine miles of a shipping port. As soon as the proprietors begin to receive toll they will doubtless find an ample compensation for their pecuniary advances. By an estimate made years ago, it was calculated that the amount in the commencement would be at the rate of £9,875 Virginia currency per annum. The toll must every year become more productive as the quantity of articles for exportation will be augmented in a rapid proportion with the increase of population and the extension of settlements. In the meantime the effect will be immediately seen in the agriculture of the interior country, for the multitude of horses now employed in carrying its produce to market will then be used for the purpose of tillage. But in order to form just conceptions of the utility of this inland navigation it will be requisite to notice the long rivers which fall into the Patowmak and even the

geographical position of the western waters. The Shenandoah which disembogues just above the Blue Mountains may according to report, be made navigable at a trifling expense more than 150 miles from its confluence with the Patowmak and will receive and convey the produce of the richest part of the State. The South branch still higher is navigable in its present condition nearly, or quite, 100 miles through extremely fertile lands. But there on the Virginia side are several small rivers that may with facility be improved so as to afford a passage for boats. On the Maryland side are the Monocacy, Antietam and Conogocheague, some of which pass through the State of Maryland and have their sources in Pennsylvania.

“From Fort Cumberland (or Wills Creek) one or two good waggon roads may be made, by which the distance will be about 35 miles to the Yohogany, a large and navigable branch of the Monongahela, which last forms a junction with the Allegany at Fort Pitt, from whence the river takes the name of the Ohio until that also loses its current and name in the Mississippi. . . . When we have arrived at either of these western waters the navigation through that immense country is opened in a thousand directions and to the lakes in several places by portage of less than ten miles and by one portage of one mile only.”

“Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past.” Samuel C. Busey, M.D., LL.D. Wash, 1898. Page 297:

“In marked contrast with the unfavorable criticisms and *maladie du pays* of some of the honorable and official croakers are Warden’s delightful pictures of the salubrity of the climate, fertility of the soil, abundance and variety of the food supplies, vegetable and animal, game and fish, together with the products transported from a distance by water, especially from the interior of Maryland and Virginia by the Potomac Canal Company, chartered in 1784 by the Legislature of Maryland, and Shenandoah Navigation Company, chartered by the Legislature of Va., through which was brought to the portage town of



Georgetown in a single year (1811) '27 hogsheads of sugar, 118,076 barrels of flour, 5718 barrels of whiskey, 465 bushels of wheat, 3600 bushels of maize, and, in addition, large quantities of pig-iron, castings, ship-timber, rye, flax-seed, hemp, butter, oats, cloverseed, arms, and staves.' The method of transportation is described by Mr. Thomas W. Riley as follows: 'In my boyhood days there was a great deal of business done in what were known as arks by those who lived on the upper Potomac. They had no other way to bring their wheat, corn, oats, hay, and other produce to market. These arks were large wooden floats, put together in a substantial, though inexpensive manner with wooden bolts and pins. They carried a great deal. These arks were floated down the river, and helped with poles where they were not carried by the current. On their arrival in Georgetown, after their contents were sold, the arks were taken to pieces and the lumber sold. I have seen hundreds of them. This was before the opening of the Ches. and O. Canal. People nowadays talk about push and enterprise, as if it were a new invention and they the only discoverers of it. Though I have always tried to keep up with the procession in a business way, I assure you I have seen evidences of a "get there" spirit among the grandfathers of some of the business men of today that surpassed much of their so-called push. These ark-owners had goods to sell, and, though they did not come with lightning speed, they got down to market just the same.' "

From the *National Intelligencer*, Washington, Aug. 23, 1802.

*"Potomack Navigation.*—At a meeting of the Potomack Company held on Wednesday the second instant a dividend of the capital stock at the rate of three per cent per annum was declared for the time since the locks at the Great Falls have been opened and \$5.55 per share, the amount thereof will be paid to the respective stock holders or to their legal representatives on demand, by the treasurer of the Company By order of the Board. JAMES CARLETON, Treasurer.

"GEORGETOWN, Aug. 11, 1802."

Baltimore (*American?*), Jan. 10, 1804:

“So fully were we of the opinion that our legislature would have granted the respectfull and patriotic petition of so large and respectable a portion of their constituency for passing the necessary laws for erecting turnpike companies on the three principal roads leading from this city (Baltimore) that without adverting to the possibility that such might not be the case we took the liberty of pointing the public zeal to a quarter which appeared to be of primary importance to this city, to Frederick, Washington and Allegany counties. If any man who is capable of following its delineations will take the map of Maryland and view the circuitous route by which the productions of these counties and the neighboring districts of Pennsylvania have to reach this city; if he will take a chaise and travel the miry sloughs, the dreadful precipices, the often-times impassable streams which would every where freeze him with horror chills, he could not fail to be astonished at that perseverance in the farmer and waggoner which overcome all these difficulties and fill our warehouses with their various and burthensome productions. The other roads, though not so immediately important, are in a situation no better. The Baltimorean may solace himself in the idle dream that this city notwithstanding all these obstacles will continue to flourish and to be the emporium of this enriching commerce. Vain delusion! In less than ten years (since the talents and wisdom of our legislators have suffered the present opportunity to slip) without having it in our power hereafter to counteract its effects, a capitol will be established at Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria, or at all three of them which will completely turn the current of that trade from our metropolis. A few years ago we inspected as much flour in one quarter as the above places did in four, but the last year but one, if our information is correct, or the year before that, two of them only inspected several thousand barrels more than we did. Other produce of the west, no doubt, kept equal pace and in a few years more, foreign orders for the shipment of tobacco, flour, etc., will be transferred from this to the Potomak.” Etc., etc.

From *The Museum*, George Town, Jan. 1, 1809.  
Editorial.

“The inland navigation of the Potomak for 300 miles above through a country excelled by none in fertility, is a source from which George Town must derive immense commercial advantages. The valuable productions of that extensive region rapidly increasing with the advancement of agriculture and the extension of population must be poured into her lap and deposited with her merchants. Already among other articles upwards of 100,000 barrels of flour in one season have been floated down the stream, . . . Cannon Foundry and paper mill, Mason’s Island, Causeway to Virginia, Bridge at Little Falls (chain) Georgetown College, Columbian College Three Ladies’ Academies. Thos. Corcoran Mayor.” Etc.

“July 19th, 1796, Georgetown. On Friday arrived here Robert Liston Esquire, the British Minister with his lady accompanied by Edward Thornton, his seeretary, Gabriel Wood, British Consul for this State and Henry Murray Stewart, second son of the Earl of Bute. Yesterday they made an excursion to the great falls of Potomac, to day they are to proceed to Mt. Vernon.”

From *Baltimore Advertiser*:

“For Rent, Merchent Mill, Distillery and Brewery, also sundry stone quarries at Little Falls of Potomac, for any time not less than seven or more than eleven years. Mill House 42x40 ft., three stories built of stone, 3 pair of French burr stones, 2 over-shot, 18 feet water wheels, Evans machinery complete with every other thing proper and necessary for carrying on the business with despatch and as little expense as possible; all in good order. From mill to my landing on the river about 4 yards and then to George Town and Washington about three miles, to Alexandria eleven miles. Also on place a large stone cooper’s shop, a stone granary and a commodious miller’s house,—a brick building on river. Also a brewery and distillery of stone; in them are three stills, six copper boilers, etc., all in good order. Quarries on this land

on river—finest quality; on top of the hill, within 200 yards of the dwelling house with out-buildings and gardens.

“RICHARD FENDALL, 1796.”

“At Little Falls in 1801 flour mill with three stones—brewery, distillery—granary, etc.”—July 14, 1801, *Alexandria Advertiser*.

Taggart in “Old Georgetown”:

“During its existence the trade of Georgetown extended as far as Fort Osage on the Missouri to Lake Erie and to Mobile. The route to Fort Osage was first up the Potomac 220 miles, then overland to Brownsville on the Monongahela, a branch of the Ohio, 25 miles, thence down the Ohio to its junction with the Mississippi, up the Mississippi to St. Louis and afterwards by the Missouri to the Fort. For Lake Erie the goods were sent over the same route to Cincinnati on the Ohio, thence up the Miami of the Ohio to its farthest point at Lorimer’s Store, thence overland 35 miles to Fort Wayne on the Miami of the Lakes, and down this river to Lake Erie. For Mobile the goods were sent from Georgetown to Brownsville by the above route, then down the Monongahela and Ohio to the mouth of the Tennessee river, then up this river to the Mussel Shoals, or to Colbert’s Ferry, thence overland to the Tombigbee at the junction of that river with a branch called the Yibby, 120 miles, thence down the Tombigbee to Mobile.”

## APPENDIX F.

### REPORT OF THOS. MOORE, ENGINEER, OF VIRGINIA.

“BROOKVILLE, Aug. 1, 1820.

“*Dear Friend;* Agreeably to thy request I will endeavor to state some of the results derived from my late examination of the country between the Ohio and Potomac rivers, with the view to ascertain the practicability of uniting those rivers either by a water communication the whole distance or by means of a short portage between the nearest practicable points of canal navigation, and also from the examination of the Potomac river in order to ascertain the present state of the navigation and the best means of improving the same.

“With regard to the first—a little topographical knowledge of the country alluded to will clearly indicate that if such a connection is made with the western waters, it must be either with the waters of the Cheat or Youghiogheny river. On examining the former I found that part of it which passes what is called Dunkard’s Bottom approaches about as near to the Potomac as any other point that could be selected for the purpose, and for about 5 miles downward the fall is not too great for a sluice navigation, but a fall then occurs of nearly 30 feet (by estimation) in one mile, the lower part of which is too abrupt to be improved by any other means than by a lock. From thence to the mouth of Sandy Creek, about 8 or 9 miles, the fall is very considerable, particularly at one place where it is much greater than the one just described.—Thence to Henthorn’s Quarry by estimation 10 miles from the part that I saw and a description of the remainder I should suppose the fall might average about 10 feet per mile and not too abrupt in any one place to be overcome by sluices.—Thence to the junction with the Monongahela, about 12 miles, it has been declared navigable by the laws of Virginia.

“It appears therefore quite certain that if this river is used a considerable expense of lockage will be incurred on one sec-



tion of it, the remainder may be made a tolerable sluice navigation for about 8 months in the year except when interrupted by ice. From the Dunkard's Bottom to the mouth of Savage river on the north branch of the Potomac is 57 miles, but to Crab Tree run, a branch of Savage river at Swan's old mill, the highest point of practicable canal navigation, the distance is only 27 miles. The present road between these points is injudiciously located and is in many places very steep, I think however that a road may be had within 5% of activity and declivity without increasing the distance.

"If the waters of the Youghiogeny should be preferred, then a branch called Deep creek will be the most eligible. There are several branches of this stream which form a junction and compose a stream which may answer tolerably well to supply the summit level of a canal. This junction is about 2 miles west of a low gap in the Alleghany ridge which has been long spoken of as a suitable point of connection between the eastern and western waters. From this gap the levels were taken both ways. It was found that the fall westward to the point mentioned on Deep creek was 204.03 feet. The fall eastward to the junction of the two branches of Crab Tree run just above Gen. Swan's old mill is 340.99 feet, the distance rather less than two miles. The fall from the last mentioned point to the mouth of Savage river is 1366.70 feet, the distance not measured, but believed to be about 13 miles. It appears then that the waters of Deep Creek is 136.87 feet higher than the waters of Crab Tree run at Swan's mill, and of course might be brought through by a tunnell and discharged into the Potomac, but in case of a canal navigation the tunnell would be on the summit level and the waters of Deep creek would supply locks both ways. This creek lies in the Glades and the ascent from it towards the ridge but small for a considerable distance. I think therefore that by driving up an open canal as far as the ground would permit, and then taking the shortest possible distance to the level on the other side that the canal would not exceed 2 miles in length. I believe a road might be made across the ridge from one point to the other at 3 degrees that would not exceed 5 miles in distance.



“Deep creek continues to flow through the glades 10 to 12 miles below the before mentioned point, and then with a rapid descent (as I am told) falls into the Youghiogheny. From this junction to the National road I have seen this river but partially, I know however from former surveys that at the crossing of the road the water is many hundred feet nearer to the level of tide water than the water of Deep creek. From the National road to the falls I am acquainted with the bed of the stream, in this section the fall is very great. The stream above Turkey Foot where three great branches unite and which is about 6 miles below the road, is too inconsiderable to be used as a river navigation, and below Turkey Foot it is too rapid and dangerous quite to the foot of falls on the western side of Laurel hill, so that a canal and lock navigation must be adopted from the first mentioned point on Deep creek to the last mentioned on Youghiogheny.

“On account of some blanks yet remaining between the several surveys from the tide water across to the western waters, I am not in possession of data to determine exactly the whole fall in this distance, but in round numbers it will not be probably much over or under 1700 feet to be overcome by lockage. On the eastern side, from the eastern end of the tunnell to Swan’s mill, the fall will be 136.87 feet and from thence, as has been stated, to the mouth of Savage, 1366.71, making the whole to be overcome by lockage, 1503.58 feet.

“From the mouth of Savage to the mouth of New creek, a distance of 8 miles, 33 perches the fall by the leveling of Col. G. Gilpin and J. Smith, is 190.8 feet which is rather more than 23 feet per mile. This may probably be made tolerably safe for descending boats 4 or 5 months in the year, but it will always be excessively laborious to ascend with any loading;—so, that to make the navigation materially useful, the addition of 190 feet must be added to the lockage; from the mouth of New creek to Cumberland 22  $\frac{1}{4}$  miles, the fall is 254 feet, the average per mile 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet. On this section some money has been very usefully expended and with a little more improvement might be rendered navigable for keel boats carrying 100 barrels of flour 6 months in the year.

“The examination of the river from Cumberland downwards was commenced on the 10th of the 7th month, the water having fallen very rapidly for the last three or four days preceding, it was then believed to be lower than usual at the same time of the year. I think if the water had been all collected in a 20 foot sluice and falling with a velocity that would be acquired by a descent of 6 inches per 100 feet it would have given about 10 inches of water. The work that has been done for the first 9 or 10 miles is not in every part as well designed as I think it might have been, but much better than is usually seen. There has been however more money expended on some parts than necessary, and other parts left unfinished, which require the expenditure of a small sum to render the whole in the greatest degree useful. Thence down to the mouth of the south branch the river has been partially improved but for want of a little annual attention many of these improvements are gone out of repair, a moderate sum would place the river from Cumberland to south branch in a tolerable state for sluice navigation, when there is water, which perhaps cannot be counted on for more than about half the year.

“Below the south branch there was a sufficient quantity of water to give at least 15 inches depth in a well graduated sluice, the bed of the river below the junction of the two branches becomes wider, and of course improvements will generally be rather more expensive. Many of the worst places above Hancock Town have been a little improved, at the Tumbling dam falls there is a good sluice, except that it requires a farther extension at the lower end to diminish the fall in that part which is very hard to ascend, but at the bare falls just below there has been a long sluice made some years ago, the location of which on a converse shore is so very injudicious that it is nearly filled with gravel and will probably soon be rendered entirely useless. There are several others that are of little service, some of them have been spoiled by the interference of fish dams, several of these are a serious injury to the navigation. There are many shallow places which require improvement in this section, but none that need be expensive. I think the proper expenditure of \$500 to 600 would now give

water for keel boats with 100 barrels of flour at all times except in unusually dry seasons, from the south branch to Hancock Town. From Hancock to Williamsport very little has been done to improve the navigation, or at least there are at present but few visible remains of such efforts. The greater part of this distance requires but little. I think from \$2000 to 3000 would be quite sufficient to effect all that is necessary to be done on this section.

“From Williamsport to Sheppards Town it does not appear that any labor has been performed in the bed of the river, but little is necessary, yet there are a few places that might be improved.

“Just below Sheppards Town a long shallow ripple (Pack Horse Ford) occurs in the river which is here wide, no connected channel either natural or artificial is to be found through the ripple, the water ought to be collected and a little swelled by wings in proper directions. \$500 or 600 judiciously expended would probably render it permanently good. The navigation is then good to the head of the long canal at the beginning of the Shenandoah Falls; the entrance to this canal is somewhat difficult in high water, it may be rendered safer by extending an abutment into the river on the lower side to prevent the strong draft of water just without the present entrance. The current is very strong through the canal, but with care safe to descend. The ascent is very laborious, but is much facilitated by a substantial wall and tracking way where ropes can be used to great advantage. About half a mile below the Ferry are two short canals (called by the boatmen—the Bullring falls) taken together with a short sheet of smooth water between them, the distance may be one quarter of a mile, the fall is 6.6 feet. Opposite this point Mc.Pherson and Brien have proposed to erect iron works if a compromise can be made with the Potomac Company. If such an arrangement was made, the canal above the works ought to be sufficiently capacious to admit water for the works and also for navigation and any other proposition which the Company may have occasion for at a point rather more than half mile lower down, where there should be a lock

to descend into the river and where the fall will be 8.80 feet. The fall from the head of Shenandoah falls to the landing at Harpers Ferry is 26.75 feet. This was ascertained by finding the difference in the levels between the surface of the water in the U. S. canal when the gates were all shut and the water at the landing.

“From the lower end of Bullring to Paynes falls the navigation is troublesome in low water, it requires swelling so as to give 6 or 8 inches more water and the course straightened. At these falls Bazil Deaver is now erecting a mill dam, I suppose without the permission of the Company, but if the sluice and some other works are completed agreeably to what he proposes the navigation will be rather improved than injured. The river below for some miles is wide and shallow, swelling the water will be the best remedy. From the Bullring for 6 miles downwards, I think the cost of improving may be estimated at \$500 per mile, though I am well satisfied a less sum would answer the purpose if the best economy could be adopted in the expenditure. A little improvement is necessary in the low water course between the lower end of the long canal and Harpers Ferry.

“From the head of the island at Noland’s ferry to about one and a half mile below there are several very shallow places with but little fall. They ought to be improved by a few low dams of brush and stone. The expense would be little if managed to the best advantage; there is perhaps less depth of water on these shoals than is to be found at any other place below Harpers Ferry.

“From these shoals to Seneca falls very little improvement is necessary, in a few places the removal of loose stones would be useful. The dam at Seneca requires repairing so as to turn more water into the canal, at present there is not enough to float our little skiff, we were under the necessity of going down through the falls. Boatmen who are acquainted with the outer course may pass down with safety, but it is very hard to ascend. There certainly ought to be at least as much water in the canal at all times as would float an ascending boat with a small load. Between Seneca and Great Falls

there has been some work done to improve the bed of the river, generally to pretty good effect, but for want of timely attention some of these works are gone out of repair, and do not answer the purpose intended.

“The greatest obstruction to the navigation any where below Williamsport in the present state of the water is at Great Falls. The dam requires repairing and extending so as to give at least six or eight inches more water in the canal. At present boats with only 50 barrels are obliged to make double trips, and where there are several in company there is great detention for want of water to supply the locks.

“The bed of the river from Great Falls to the head of the Little Falls canal is generally very rough, much labor has been bestowed on it for the improvement of the navigation which has in a considerable degree produced the intended effect, but something still remains to be done in order to give sufficient depth of water in all places, and also to render the falls more easy for ascending boats at all stages of the water. The most important part of the work appears to be to make the tracking way over the rocks near Great Falls more perfect; the current in this part of the river is so rapid in high water that it renders useless the common means of ascending by setting poles, and the unevenness of the crags on the shore makes it extremely difficult and dangerous to carry a towing line over them, yet this expedient has been resorted to, it is very probable that where the rocks are smooth or at the turning of particular points, a chain might be attached to the rock by ring bolts or pins, so as to be very useful, it might be light and would be a cheap improvement.

At Stubblefield Falls the pass is safe for descending boats except that the rapidity of the current over the uneven bottom produces a roughness that causes them when fully laden to ship water, but the angle of ascent is so great and situated in the middle of the river where no advantage can be derived from towing that it is vain to think of ascending with anything like a full load with the usual number of hands until a new passage is procured or the present one better graduated. At the Crookes gap (as it is called) the location of the works



is very unnatural and of course very injudicious, the passage is made tolerably safe and easy to ascend and descend at some stages of the water at others dangerous and difficult; but of such a form and occupying ground as will cause it to require an annual attention and perhaps oftener, to preserve at all times sufficient depth of water.

“I think it may be relied on that from \$18,000 to 20,000 would now place the navigation in such a situation that boats carrying 100 barrels of flour might descend the river at all times from the mouth of the south branch to tide water, except in an unusually dry season, above Williamsport a short time, or when prevented by ice. But in this calculation I should certainly contemplate a more economical expenditure than has commonly been made in this description of improvement.”

“There are some sluices in the Potomac and also in other rivers which I have examined, that have been made in a proper direction, not one of which has ever filled with gravel or stone.”

“But when the powers of art have been exerted to the utmost extent to procure an easy navigation in the bed of a stream, still it must hold a very inferior grade to that of an independent canal, because the natural fall of the river must be overcome by the labor of men, and if the whole fall of the river is great in proportion to its length it will require a great number and therefore in proportion to the length must be very expensive compared with a canal furnished with locks, where the loaded boats are drawn on level water, by the labor of horses, but this kind of improvement requires large funds for carrying it into effect, and should not be undertaken until the period arrives that gives a reasonable prospect of remuneration from the trade that may be carried on through its channels. The transportation however on such a canal is so much cheaper than by any other means of internal communication that it may happen and I believe sometimes does happen that such a period arrives before those interested think



of making a single calculation on the subject. Knowing the great superiority of this mode of improvement and believing that it may possibly be at some time adopted on the Potomac, I have so far made myself acquainted with the ground adjacent to the river as to enable me to form an estimate of the expense of an independent canal from Cumberland to the Great Falls, I have on my notes such a description of these grounds as could be obtained from the river without a minute re-examination on shore. From these it does not appear that the excavation would be more expensive than the contemplated canal on the James river, nor the walling greater in proportion to the distance. It was found from the prices given for removing earth and other work incident to the construction of a canal that the one just mentioned ought not to cost more than \$4,300 per mile exclusive of the locks. From Cumberland to the Great Falls is 176 miles, which multiplied by 4,300 gives 756,800, the fall in that distance is 572 feet which multiplied by \$65, the price per foot at which such lockage is estimated gives 357,500, amounting to the total of \$1,114,300. This whole compared with the cost of some other canals appears to be a low estimate, but it is to be remembered that canals conducted on low levels along the ravine of a river have no deep valleys or ravines to cross as those must necessarily have on high levels in an uneven country, and therefore the great embankments and elevated aqueducts which constituted the largest items of expense in many canals are avoided,—the calculation is also made for a canal and locks of a moderate size.

“On such a canal as this the actual cost of transportation for a barrel of flour from Cumberland to the Great Falls would not exceed 15 cents, nor a bushel of coal 6 cents, and other articles in proportion, provided the boats were supplied with a quarter back load of plaster of paris or anything else at the low price of \$3 per ton. It is for those who are concerned and who are better acquainted with the present trade of the river and the future prospects to calculate whether such a toll can be added to these prices as will pay the interest on the capital above stated, and also the necessary capital for

continuing the canal to tide water. Several considerations were presented relative to this lower section which I thought required more time to digest than I felt myself authorized to take, particularly as some of them were of such a nature as to place them without the line of my duty for decision. I did not therefore take any notes relative to the grounds for, or expense of, an independent canal below the Great Falls.

“The section below Harpers Ferry would be the least expensive for the distance. As the season is now too far advanced to undertake any considerable works on the bed of the river this year, time will be given for consideration relative to the most proper mode of expending money in future on this most important river, and of obtaining more minute information with respect to the expense of improving the different sections on the best of all possible plans, for notwithstanding the cost may in the first instance appear discouraging, yet the object is a great one, even as it regards the legitimate trade of the country watered by the river and its branches, but it derives great additional importance from the circumstance of the National road being already made and offering the means of connecting the trade of this river with the western country.

“I am with great regard, thy friend

“THOS. MOORE.

“TO GEN. JOHN MASON.”

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS TO THE LEGISLATURE OF VIRGINIA, 1823. REPORT ON THE POTOMAC,  
By ISAAC BRIGGS.

“Pursuant to resolutions of the ex-officio members of your Board, dated Oct. 1822 empowering me to ask for and receive from the executors or heirs of Thos. Moore, the civil engineer lately deceased, all the rough notes of this year’s work, as far as actually done, or begun by the said Moore, and directing me to make therefrom the necessary arrangements, calculations and statements for the annual report to the Board of Public Works and to prepare and present to the said Board

at the usual period the said report and recognizing me as the "Civil Engineer of Virginia," I proceeded forthwith to the residence of the deceased engineer to obtain his notes. I received them from his son Asa. They were in pencil writing and in that rough state in which they were first made at the places to which they relate.

"The last sickness of this excellent man so suddenly arrested his career of usefulness, and from its first occurrence so entirely incapacitated him for any kind of business that it was not possible for him (as had been his custom) to review his notes, improve their arrangement, supply abbreviations and casual omissions, and write them with ink.

"I had received letters from most of the joint commissioners for the Potomac, earnestly requesting that I would undertake to finish the survey of the river from the point where it had been suspended, to arrange the notes left by the late engineer, to make the necessary calculations and form an estimate of the probable cost of an independent canal from Cumberland to tide water, and that I would proceed to the work without delay.

"Having found that the survey of the Potomac could not be resumed until early in the 12th month I employed the interval preceeding that time in making the calculations and arrangements necessary for the estimate of expense as far as the work had proceeded. The late engineer had from the 30th of the 7th to the middle of the 9th month brought the surveying and leveling about 157 miles. His own notes were continued no farther than to a point about 7 miles short of the terminating of the levelling, or 150 miles from Cumberland.

"In company with Wm. Naylor, Moses T. Hunter and Athan. Fenwick, three of the commissioners (Asa Moore jr. being surveyor and leveler), I commenced on the 11th and terminated on the 18th of the 12th month just past, the survey and examination of the remaining part of the route of the contemplated canal. I closed the survey and examination at the head of Little Falls canal. This canal is about two and one-half miles long. At its outlet the descent is 37 feet by three locks to tide water in the District of Columbia.

“From every document I have seen, and everything I have heard, relating to the subject, it appears both the late engineer and the commissioners have completely abandoned the opinion that stream navigation, whether by sluices or dams and locks is in any degree eligible on the Potowmac above tide water. That opinion ought to be abandoned everywhere, and it will be abandoned; for, the increasing light of science, shining through the clear medium of experience will convincingly show that, above tide water stream navigation is eligible nowhere.

“These gentlemen, in designating the kind of improvement most proper for the Potowmac have very wisely confined their views to an independent canal. The dimensions adopted and those on which the calculations are made, are the following; the water to be 30 feet wide on the surface, 20 feet at the bottom and 3 feet deep.

“It has been deemed expedient to divide into sections, the proposed canal, for the purpose of facilitating its execution. The first section extends from Cumberland in Maryland to the mouth of Capon in Virginia,  $54\frac{1}{2}$  miles; the second from the mouth of Capon to the mouth of Great Conogoecheague, or Williamsport in Maryland,  $33\frac{1}{2}$  miles; the third section, wholly in Maryland side from mouth of Conogoecheague to Harpers Ferry, opposite the mouth of the Shenandoah,  $38\frac{3}{4}$  miles; the fourth section, still on the Maryland side, from Harpers Ferry to the head of Great Falls,  $40\frac{1}{4}$  miles; and the fifth section, still on the Maryland side, from the head of Great Falls to tide water in the District of Columbia, 12 miles; The whole amount is 185 miles of canal navigation from Cumberland to tide water.

. . . . .

“Between Cumberland and Williamsport it is proposed in order to avoid great difficulties and to take advantage of the best and cheapest ground that the navigation should cross the Potowmac four times, the two first crossings by means of dams, and the third and fourth by means of aqueducts. In every case where a dam is the means of crossing, a guard lock

is indispensable at the entrance of the canal, where it proceeds again from the river on the opposite side. Aqueducts however as the mode of crossing rivers with a canal are on account of the superior safety and convenience which they afford to navigation decidedly preferable to dams, although more expensive in construction. Yet where we cannot avail ourselves of sufficient feeders from side streams to keep always a full and certain supply of water in our upper levels, dams across the main stream are adopted because by them we obtain an abundant supply without an additional cut for a feeder. This is precisely the case in the first crossing and in the second we have not a sufficient elevation for an aqueduct, to be safe from the effects of freshets.

“The estimates of the probable cost necessary for constructing an independent canal along the valley of the Potowmac river from Cumberland to tide water—185 miles.”

|                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| “Total with contingencies | \$2,000,000 |
|---------------------------|-------------|

“A sum which will be quite as small as is generally expended and affording \$400,000 for a compromise with the Potowmac Company, sufficient it is believed to induce it to surrender its charter without a judiciary struggle which (to say the least of it) would probably for several years prevent every step toward the accomplishment of a plan to which thousands, beside Virginia and Maryland, are looking with ardent hope, and sufficient to remove every obstacle to a subscription of the whole stock of that Company to such new fund as may be authorized by law. . . .

“RICHMOND, 1st Month 23d. 1823.”



APPENDIX G.

ACTS OF THE LEGISLATURES OF VIRGINIA, MARYLAND AND  
PENNSYLVANIA AND OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED  
STATES, IN RELATION TO THE CHESAPEAKE AND  
OHIO CANAL COMPANY; ALSO THE ACTS AND  
RESOLUTIONS OF THE STATES OF VIR-  
GINIA AND MARYLAND CONCERNING  
THE POTOMAC COMPANY.

Washington, Printed by Gales and Seaton, 1828.

“AN ACT FOR OPENING AND EXTENDING THE NAVIGATION OF  
THE POTOWMACK RIVER.

“I. Whereas the extension of the navigation of Potowmack River, from tide water to the highest place practicable on the North branch, will be of great public utility, and many persons are willing to subscribe large sums of money to effect so laudable and beneficial a work; and it is just and proper that they, their heirs, and assigns, should be empowered to receive reasonable tolls forever, in satisfaction for the money advanced by them in carrying the work into execution, and the risk they run; And whereas it may be necessary to cut canals and erect locks and other works on both sides of the river, and the legislatures of Maryland and Virginia, impressed with the importance of the object, are desirous of encouraging so useful an undertaking; Therefore,

“II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia, That it shall and may be lawful to open books in the city of Richmond, towns of Alexandria and Winchester in this state, for receiving and entering subscriptions for the said undertaking, under the management of Jaquelin Ambler and John Beckley at the city of Richmond, of John Fitzgerald and William Hartshorne at the town of Alexandria, and of Joseph Holmes and Edward Smith at the town of Winchester, and under the management of such persons and at such places in Maryland as have been appointed by the state of Maryland,



which subscriptions shall be made personally or by power of attorney, and shall be paid in Spanish milled dollars, but may be paid in foreign silver or gold coin of the value; that the said books shall be opened for receiving subscriptions on the eighth day of February next, and continue open for this purpose until the tenth day of May next, inclusive; and on the seventeenth day of the said month of May, there shall be a general meeting of the subscribers at the town of Alexandria, of which meeting notice shall be given by the said managers, or any four of them, in the Virginia and Maryland Gazettes, at least one month next before the said meeting; and such meeting shall and may be continued from day to day until the business is finished; and the acting managers at the time and place hereinafter mentioned, shall lay before such of the subscribers as shall meet according to said notice, the books by them respectively kept, containing the state of the said subscriptions; and if one half of the capital sum hereinafter mentioned, should, upon examination, appear not to have been subscribed, then the said managers at the said meeting, are empowered to take and receive subscriptions to make up the deficiency; and a just and true list of all the subscribers, with the sums subscribed by each, shall be made out and returned by the said managers, or any four or more of them, under their hands, into the general court of each state, to be there recorded; and in case more than two hundred and twenty-two thousand and two hundred and twenty-two hundred and twenty-two dollars and two-ninths of a dollar, shall be subscribed, then the same shall be reduced to that sum by the said managers, or a majority of them, by beginning at and striking off a share from the largest subscription or subscriptions, and continuing to strike off a share from all subscriptions under the largest, and above one share until the sum is reduced to the capital two hundred and twenty-two thousand two hundred and twenty-two dollars and two ninths of a dollar, or until a share is taken from all subscriptions above one share, and lots shall be drawn between the subscribers of equal sums, to determine the numbers in which such subscribers shall stand, on a list to be made for striking off as

aforesaid; and if the sum subscribed still exceeds the capital aforesaid, or all the subscriptions are reduced to one share: and if there still be an excess, then lots to be drawn to determine the subscribers who are to be excluded, to reduce the subscriptions to the capital aforesaid, which striking off shall be certified in the list aforesaid, and the said capital sum shall be reckoned and divided into five hundred shares of four hundred and forty-four dollars and four-ninths of a dollar each, of which every person subscribing may take and subscribe for one or more whole shares, and not otherwise. *Provided*, That unless one half of the said capital shall be subscribed as aforesaid, all subscriptions made in consequence of this act, shall be void, and in case one half and less than the whole of the said capital shall be subscribed as aforesaid, then the president and directors are hereby empowered and directed to take and receive the subscriptions which shall first be offered in whole shares as aforesaid, until the deficiency shall be made up, a certificate of which additional subscriptions shall be made under the hands of the president and directors, or a majority of them for the time being, and returned to and recorded in the general courts, aforesaid.

“III. And be it enacted, That in case one half of the said capital, or a greater sum, shall be subscribed as aforesaid, the said subscribers, and their heirs and assigns, from the time of the said first meeting, shall be, and are hereby declared to be incorporated into a company, by the name of the “Potowmack Company,” and may sue and be sued as such; and such of the said subscribers as shall be present at the said meeting, or a majority of them, are hereby empowered and required to elect a president and four directors, for conducting the said undertaking, and managing all the said company’s business and concerns, for and during such time, not exceeding three years, as the said subscribers, or a majority of them, shall think fit. And in counting the votes of all general meetings of the said company, each member shall be allowed one vote for every share, as far as ten shares, and one vote for every five shares above ten, by him or her held at the time in the said company; and any proprietor, by writing under his or

her hand, executed before two witnesses, may depute any other member or proprietor to vote and act as proxy for him or her, at any general meeting.

“IV. And be it enacted, That the said president and directors so elected, and their successors, or a majority of them assembled, shall have full power and authority to agree with any person or persons on behalf of said company, to cut such canals and erect such locks, and perform such other works as they shall judge necessary for opening, improving, and extending the navigation of the said river above tidewater, to the highest part of the North Branch to which navigation can be extended, and carrying on the same, from place to place, and from time to time, and upon such terms and in such manner as they shall think fit; and out of the money arising from the subscriptions and the tolls, and such other aids hereinafter given, to pay for the same, and to repair and keep in order the said locks and other works necessary therein, and to defray all incidental charges; and also to appoint a treasurer, clerk, and such other officers, toll-gatherers, managers, and servants as they shall judge requisite, and to agree for and to settle their respective wages or allowances, and settle, pass, and sign their accounts, and also to make and establish rules of proceeding, and to transact all the other business and concerns of the said company, in and during the intervals between the general meetings of the same; and they shall be allowed as a satisfaction for their trouble therein, such sum of money as shall, by a general meeting of the subscribers, be determined. *Provided, always,* that the treasurer shall give bond in such penalty and with such security as the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, shall direct, for the true and faithful discharge of the trust reposed in him, and that the allowance be made to him for his services shall not exceed three pounds in the hundred, for the disbursements by him made; and that no officer in the said company shall have any vote in the settlement or passing of his own account.

“V. And be it enacted, That the said President and Directors and their successors, or a majority of them, shall have

full power and authority, from time to time, as money shall be wanted, to make and sign orders for that purpose, and direct at what time, and in what proportion, the proprietors shall advance and pay off the sums subscribed, which orders shall be advertised at least one month in the Virginia and Maryland Gazettes; and they are hereby authorized and empowered to demand and receive of the several proprietors, from time to time, the sums of money so ordered to be advanced for carrying on and executing, or repairing and keeping in order the said works, until the sums deposited into the hands of the Treasurer, to be by him disbursed and paid out as the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, shall order and direct. And if any of the said proprietors shall refuse or neglect to pay their said proportions within one month after the same so ordered and advertised as aforesaid, the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, may sell at auction and convey to the purchaser, the share or shares of such proprietor so refusing or neglecting payment, giving at least one month's notice of sale in the Virginia and Maryland Gazettes, and after retaining the sum due, and charges of sale out of the money produced thereby, they shall refund and pay the overplus, if any, to the former owner; and if such sale shall not produce the full sum ordered and directed to be advanced as aforesaid, with the incidental charges, the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, may in the name of the company, sue for and recover the balance by action of debt, or on the case; and the said purchaser or purchasers shall be subject to the same rules and regulations, as if the said sale and conveyance had been made by the original proprietor, and to continue the succession of the said President and Directors, and to keep up the same number.

“VI. Be it enacted, That, from time to time, upon the expiration of the said term for which the said president and directors were appointed, the proprietors of the said company, at the next general meeting, shall either continue the said president and directors, or any of them, or shall chose others in their stead; and in case of the death, re-

moval, resignation, or incapacity of the president, or any of the said directors, may and shall, in the manner aforesaid, elect any other person or persons, to be president and directors, in the room of him or them so dying, removing or resigning; and may at any of their general meetings, remove the president, or any of the directors, and appoint others, for and during the remainder of the term for which such persons or persons were at first to have acted.

“VII. And be it enacted, That every president and director, before he acts as such, shall take an oath or affirmation, for the due execution of his office.

“VIII. And be it enacted, That the presence of proprietors, having one hundred shares at least, shall be necessary to constitute a general meeting; and that there shall be a general meeting of proprietors on the first Monday in August in every year, at such convenient town as shall, from time to time, be appointed by the said general assembly; but if a sufficient number shall not attend on that day, the proprietors who do attend, may adjourn such meeting from day to day, till a general meeting of proprietors shall be had, which may be continued from day to day, until the business of the company is finished; to which meeting the president and directors shall make report, and render distinct and just accounts of all their proceedings, and on finding them fairly and justly stated, the proprietors then present, or a majority of them, shall give a certificate thereof, a duplicate of which shall be entered on the said company's books; and at such yearly general meetings, after leaving in the hands of the treasurer such sum as the proprietors, or a majority of them, shall judge necessary for repairs and contingent charges, an equal dividend of all the net profits, arising from the tolls hereby granted, shall be ordered, and made to and among all the proprietors of the said company, in proportion to their several shares; and upon any emergency in the interval between the said yearly meetings, the said president, or a majority of the said directors, may appoint a general meeting of the proprietors of the said company, at any convenient town, giving at least one month's previous notice



in the Maryland and Virginia Gazettes, which meeting may be adjourned and continued as aforesaid.

“IX. And be it further enacted, That for and in consideration of the expenses the said proprietors will be at, not only in cutting the said canals, erecting locks and other works, for opening the different falls of the said river, and improving and extending the navigation thereof, but in maintaining and keeping the same in repair, the said canal and works, with all their profits, shall be, and the same are hereby vested in the said proprietors, their heirs and assigns, forever, as tenants in common, in proportion to their respective shares; and the same shall be deemed real estate, and be forever exempt from payment of any tax, imposition, or assessment whatsoever; and it shall and may be lawful for the said president and directors at all times, forever hereafter, to demand and receive, at the nearest convenient place below the mouth of the South Branch, and at or near Payne’s Falls, and at or above the Great Falls of the river Potomac, and every of these places separately, for all commodities, transported through either of them respectively, tolls, according to the following table and rates, to wit:—



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Tolls.                                     |    |    |                      |    |    |                        |    |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----|----|----------------------|----|----|------------------------|----|----|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | At the<br>Mouth of the<br>South<br>Branch. |    |    | At Payne's<br>Falls. |    |    | At the Great<br>Falls. |    |    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Sterling.                                  |    |    |                      |    |    |                        |    |    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | £.                                         | s. | d. | £.                   | s. | d. | £.                     | s. | d. |
| Every pipe or hogshead of wine, containing more than 65 gallons. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                         | 0                                          | 1  | 6  | 0                    | 1  | 6  | 0                      | 3  | 0  |
| Every hogshead of rum or other spirits . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 0                                          | 1  | 3  | 0                    | 1  | 3  | 0                      | 2  | 6  |
| Every hogshead of tobacco. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 0                                          | 1  | 0  | 0                    | 1  | 0  | 0                      | 2  | 0  |
| Every cask between 65 and 35 gallons, one half of a pipe or hogshead, barrels one-fourth part, and smaller casks or kegs in proportion, according to the quality and quantity of their contents of wine or spirits.                                              |                                            |    |    |                      |    |    |                        |    |    |
| For casks of linseed oil the same as spirits.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                            |    |    |                      |    |    |                        |    |    |
| Every bushel of wheat, peas, beans, or flaxseed, . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 0                                          | 0  | 0½ | 0                    | 0  | 0½ | 0                      | 0  | 1  |
| Every bushel of Indian corn, or other grain, or salt. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 0                                          | 0  | 0¼ | 0                    | 0  | 0¼ | 0                      | 0  | 0½ |
| Every barrel of pork. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 0                                          | 0  | 6  | 0                    | 0  | 6  | 0                      | 1  | 0  |
| Every barrel of beef. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 0                                          | 0  | 4  | 0                    | 0  | 4  | 0                      | 0  | 8  |
| Every barrel of flour. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 0                                          | 0  | 3  | 0                    | 0  | 3  | 0                      | 0  | 6  |
| Every ton of hemp, flax, potash, bar or manufactured iron. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                               | 0                                          | 2  | 6  | 0                    | 2  | 6  | 0                      | 5  | 0  |
| Every ton of pig-iron, or castings. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 0                                          | 0  | 10 | 0                    | 0  | 10 | 0                      | 1  | 8  |
| Every ton of copper, lead, or other ore, other than iron ore. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                            | 0                                          | 2  | 0  | 0                    | 2  | 0  | 0                      | 4  | 0  |
| Every ton of stone, or iron ore. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 0                                          | 0  | 5  | 0                    | 0  | 5  | 0                      | 0  | 10 |
| Every hundred bushels of lime. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 0                                          | 1  | 3  | 0                    | 1  | 3  | 0                      | 2  | 6  |
| Every chaldron of coals. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 0                                          | 0  | 5  | 0                    | 0  | 5  | 0                      | 0  | 10 |
| Every hundred pipe staves. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 0                                          | 0  | 2¼ | 0                    | 0  | 2¼ | 0                      | 0  | 4½ |
| Every hundred hogshead staves or pipe or hogshead heading . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                              | 0                                          | 0  | 1½ | 0                    | 0  | 1½ | 0                      | 0  | 8  |
| Every hundred barrel staves, or barrel heading. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 0                                          | 0  | 1  | 0                    | 0  | 1  | 0                      | 0  | 2  |
| Every hundred cubic feet of plank, or scantling. . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 0                                          | 0  | 10 | 0                    | 0  | 10 | 0                      | 1  | 8  |
| Every hundred cubic feet of other timber, . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 0                                          | 0  | 5½ | 0                    | 0  | 5½ | 0                      | 0  | 11 |
| Every gross hundred weight of all other commodities and packages, . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                      | 0                                          | 0  | 1½ | 0                    | 0  | 1½ | 0                      | 0  | 3  |
| And every empty boat or vessel, which has not commodities on board, to yield so much, except an empty boat or vessel returning, whose load has already paid, at the respective places, the sums fixed at each, in which case she is to repass toll free. . . . . | 0                                          | 2  | 6  | 0                    | 2  | 26 | 0                      | 5  | 0  |

Which tolls are rated in sterling money, and may be discharged in foreign gold or silver coin of the present fineness, at the following rates, to wit:

|                                                          |    |    |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|
| Spanish milled piece of eight, or dollar,                | £0 | 4  | 6  |
| Other coined silver, of equal fineness, per ounce,       | 0  | 5  | 1½ |
| English milled crowns,                                   | 0  | 5  | 9  |
| French silver crowns,                                    | 0  | 5  | 0  |
| Johannes weighing 18 pennyweight,                        | 3  | 12 | 0  |
| Half Johannes weighing 9 pennyweight,                    | 1  | 16 | 0  |
| Moidores weighing 6 pennyweight 18 grains,               | 1  | 7  | 0  |
| English guineas weighing 5 pennyweights 5 grains,        | 1  | 1  | 0  |
| French guineas weighing 5 pennyweights 5 grains,         | 1  | 0  | 10 |
| Doubloons weighing 17 pennyweights,                      | 3  | 6  | 0  |
| Spanish pistoles weighing 4 pennyweights 6 grains,       | 0  | 16 | 6  |
| French milled pistoles weighing 4 pennyweights 4 grains, | 0  | 16 | 4  |
| Arabian chequins weighing 2 pennyweights 3 grains,       | 0  | 8  | 6  |
| Other gold coin (German excepted) by the pennyweight,    | 0  | 4  | 0  |

But if any of the coins aforesaid, should hereafter be rendered less valuable than they are at present, either by lessening their weight, or therewith adding a greater quantity of alloy than is in them respectively at present, then so much of any of said coins, the value of which is so reduced, to be received for the tolls aforesaid, as is equal in value to the said coins in their present state of fineness and weight, shall be payable for the said tolls at their reduced value only. And in case of refusal or neglect to pay the tolls at the time of offering to pass through any of the said places, and previous to the vessel's passing through the same, the collectors of the said tolls may lawfully refuse passage to such vessels; and if any vessel shall pass without paying the said toll, then the said collectors may seize such vessel, wherever found, and sell the same at auction for ready money, which, so far as is necessary, shall be applied toward paying the said toll, and all expenses of seizure and sale, and the balance, if any, shall be paid to the owner, and the person having the direction of such vessel shall be liable for such toll, if the same is not paid by sale of such vessel, as aforesaid; Provided, That the said proprietors, or a majority of them, holding, at least, three hundred shares, shall have full power and authority, at any general meeting, to lessen the said tolls or any of them; or to determine that any article may pass free of toll.

“10. And be it enacted, That the said river, and the works

to be erected thereon in virtue of this act, when completed, shall forever thereafter be esteemed and taken to be navigable as a public highway, free for the transportation of all goods, commodities, or produce, whatsoever, on payment of the tolls imposed by this act; and no other toll or tax whatever, for the use of the water of said river, and the works thereon erected, shall, at any time hereafter, be imposed, by both or either of the said States, subject, nevertheless, to such regulations as the Legislatures of the States may concur in, to prevent the importation of prohibited goods, or to prevent fraud in evading the payment of duties imposed in both or either of the said States, on goods imported into either of them. And whereas it is necessary for making the said canal, locks, and other works, that a provision should be made for condemning a quantity of land for the purpose—

“11. Be it enacted, That it shall and may be lawful for the said president and directors, or a majority of them, to agree with the owners of any land, through which the said canal is intended to pass, for the purchase thereof, and in case of a disagreement, or in case the owner thereof shall be a feme-covert, under age, non compos, or out of the State, on application to any two justices of the county, in which such land may lie, the said justices shall issue their warrant under their hands, to the sheriff of their county, to summons a jury of twenty-four inhabitants of his county, of property and reputation, not related to the parties, nor in any manner interested, to meet on the land to be valued, at a day to be expressed in the warrant, nor less than ten, nor more than twenty days thereafter; and the sheriff upon receiving the said warrant, shall forthwith summon the said jury, and when met, provided that not less than twelve do appear, shall administer an oath or affirmation to every jurymen that shall appear; ‘that he will faithfully, justly, and impartially value the land, (not exceeding in any case the width of one hundred and forty feet) and all damages the owner thereof shall sustain by the cutting the canal through such land, according to the best of his skill and judgment; and that in such valuation, he will not spare any person through favor or affection,

nor any persons grieve through malice, hatred, or ill-will.' And the inquisition thereupon taken, shall be signed by the sheriff, and some twelve or more of the jury, and returned by the sheriff to the clerk of his county, to be by him recorded;

"And upon every such valuation, the jury is hereby directed to describe and ascertain the bounds of the land by them valued, and their valuation shall be conclusive on all persons, and shall be paid by the said president and directors to the owner of the land, or his legal representative; and on payment thereof, the said company shall be seized in fee of such land, as if conveyed by the owner to them, and their successors, by legal conveyance; Provided, nevertheless, That if any further damage shall arise to any proprietor of land, in consequence of opening said canal, or in erecting such works, than had been before considered and valued, it shall and may be lawful for such proprietor, as often as any new damage shall happen, by application to, and a warrant from, any two justices of the county where the lands lie, to have such further damage valued by a jury in like manner, and to receive and recover the same of the president and directors; but nothing herein shall be taken or construed to entitle the proprietor of any such land to recover compensation for any damages which may happen to any mills, forges, or other water works or improvements, which shall be begun or erected by such proprietor, after such first valuation, unless the said damage is wilfully or maliciously done by the said president and directors, or some person by their authority.

"12. And be it enacted, That the said president and directors, or a majority of them, are hereby authorized to agree with the proprietors for the purchase of a quantity of land, not exceeding one acre, at or near each of the said places of receipt of tolls aforesaid, for the purpose of erecting necessary buildings; and in case of disagreement, or any of the disabilities aforesaid, or the proprietor being out of the State, then such land may be valued, condemned, and paid for, as aforesaid, for the purpose aforesaid: And whereas some of the places through which it may be necessary to conduct the said canals may be convenient for erecting mills, forges, and

other waterworks, and the persons, possessors of such situation may design to improve the same, and it is the intention of this act not to interfere with private property, but for the purpose of improving and perfecting the said navigation—

“13. Be it enacted, That the water, or any part thereof, conveyed through any canal or cut made by the said company, shall not be used for any purpose but navigation unless the consent of the proprietors of the land through which the same shall be led, be first had; and the said president and directors, or a majority of them, are hereby empowered and directed, if it can be conveniently done, to answer both the purposes of navigation and water works aforesaid, to enter into reasonable agreement with the proprietors of such situations, concerning the just proportion of the expenses of making large canals or cuts capable of carrying such quantities of water as may be sufficient for the purposes of navigation, and also for any such water works as aforesaid.

“14. And be it enacted, That it shall and may be lawful for every of the said proprietors to transfer his share or shares, by deed, executed before two witnesses, and registered after proof of the execution thereof, in the said company's books, and not otherwise, except by devise, which devise shall also be exhibited to the president and directors, and registered in the company's books, before the devisee or devisees shall be entitled to draw any part of the profits from the said tolls: Provided, That no transfer whatsoever shall be made, except for one or more whole shares, and not for part of such shares, and that no share shall at any time be sold, conveyed, transferred, or held in trust, for the use and benefit, or in the name of another, whereby the said president and directors or proprietors of the said company, or any of them, shall or may be challenged or made to answer, concerning any such trust, but that every such person appearing as aforesaid, to be proprietor, shall, as to the others of the said company be to every intent taken absolutely as such; but as between any trustee and the person for whose benefit any trust shall be created, the common remedy may be pursued. And whereas it hath been represented to this General Assembly, that sundry persons are



willing and desirous, on account of the great public advantages and improvement their estates may receive thereby to promote and contribute towards so useful an undertaking, and to subscribe sums of money to be paid on condition the said works are really completed and carried into execution, but do not care to run any risk, or desire to have any property therein—

“15. Be it therefore enacted, That the said president and directors shall be, and are hereby empowered to receive and take in subscriptions, upon the said conditions, and upon the said works being completed and carried into execution, according to the true intent and meaning of this act, that it shall and may be lawful for the said president and directors or a majority of them, in case of refusal or neglect of payment, in the name of the company as aforesaid, to sue for and recover of the said subscribers, their heirs, executors or administrators, the sums by them respectively subscribed, by action of debt, or upon the case, in any court of record within this State.

“16. And be it enacted, That, if the said capital, and other aids already granted by this act, shall prove insufficient, it shall and may be lawful for the said company, from time to time, to increase the said capital by the addition of so many more whole shares, as shall be judged necessary by the said proprietors, or a majority of them, holding at least three hundred shares, present at any general meeting of the said company. And the said president and directors, or a majority of them, are hereby empowered, and required, after giving at least one month's notice thereof in the Maryland and Virginia Gazettes, to open books in the aforementioned places, for receiving and entering such additional subscriptions, in which the proprietors of the said company for the time being, shall, and are hereby declared to have the preference of all others for the first thirty days after the said books shall be opened as aforesaid, of taking and subscribing for so many whole shares as any of them shall choose. And the said president and directors are hereby required to observe in all other respects the same rules therein, as are by this act pre-



scribed, for receiving and adjusting the first subscriptions, and in like manner to return, under the hands of any three or more of them, an exact list of such additional subscribers, with the sums by them respectively subscribed, into the general courts aforesaid, to be there recorded, and all proprietors of such additional sums, shall, and hereby are declared to be, from thenceforward, incorporated into the said company.

“17. And it is hereby declared and enacted, That the tolls herein before allowed to be demanded and received at the nearest convenient place below the mouth of the South Branch, are granted, and shall be paid, on condition only, That the said Potomac Company shall make the river well capable of being navigated in dry seasons, by vessels drawing one foot of water from the place on the North Branch, at which a road shall set off to the Cheat river, agreeably to the determination of the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland, to and through the place which may be fixed on, below the mouth of the South Branch, for receipt of the tolls aforesaid; but if the said river is only made navigable as aforesaid, from Fort Cumberland, to and through the said place below the mouth of the South Branch, then only two thirds of the said tolls shall be there received. That the tolls herein before allowed, to be demanded and received at or near Payne’s Falls, are granted and shall be payable on condition only, that the said Potomac Company shall make the river well capable of being navigated in dry seasons, by vessels drawing one foot water, from the said place of collection, near the mouth of South Branch to and through Payne’s Falls as aforesaid. That the tolls herein before allowed to be demanded and received at the Great Falls, are granted and shall be payable on condition only, that the said Potomac Company shall make the river well capable of being navigated in dry seasons, from Payne’s Falls to the Great Falls, by vessels drawing one foot water, and from the Great Falls to tide water, and shall, at or near the Great Falls, make a cut or canal, twenty-five feet wide, and four feet deep, with sufficient locks, if necessary, each of eighty feet in length, sixteen feet in breadth, and capable of conveying vessels or rafts

drawing four feet water at the least, and shall make, at or near the Little Falls, such canal and locks, if necessary, as will be sufficient and proper to let vessels and rafts aforesaid, into tide water, or render the said river navigable in the natural course.

“18. And it is hereby provided and enacted, That in case the said company shall not begin the said work within one year after the company shall be formed, or if the navigation shall not be made and improved between the Great Falls and Fort Cumberland, in the manner hereinbefore mentioned, within three years after the said company shall be formed, that then the said company shall not be entitled to any benefit, privilege, or advantage, under this act: And in case the said company shall not complete the navigation through and from the Great Falls to tide water as aforesaid, within ten years after the said company shall be formed, then shall all interest of the said company and all preference in their favor, as to the navigation and tolls, at, through, and from, the Great Falls to tide water, be forfeited, and cease.

“19. And be it enacted, That all commodities of the produce of either of the said States, or of the western country, which may be carried or transported through the said locks, canals, and rivers, may be landed, sold, or otherwise disposed of, free from any other duties, impositions, regulations, or restrictions, of any kind, than the like commodities of the produce of the State in which the same may happen to be so landed, sold, shipped, or disposed of.

“20. And be it further enacted, That the Treasurer of this Commonwealth shall be authorized and directed to subscribe to the amount of fifty shares in behalf of the same, and the money necessary in consequence of such subscription, shall be paid as the same shall be required. And the Treasurer for the time being shall have a right to vote according to such shares, in person, or by proxy, appointed by him, and shall receive the proportion of the tolls aforesaid, which shall from time to time become due to this State for the shares aforesaid.

“21. And be it further enacted, That so much of every act

and acts within the purview of this act, shall be, and the same is hereby, repealed.”

Passed by the Virginia Assembly October, 1784.

Passed by the Maryland Assembly in the November session, 1784.

In October, 1784, the Virginia Assembly passed an act to amend the above act, vesting in George Washington, Esq., fifty shares in the Potomac Company and one hundred shares in the James River Company.

Upon the General's declining to accept the shares personally, but accepting them in trust for educational purposes, the Assembly passed another amendatory act October, 1785, whereby,

“2. Be it enacted, That the (above) said recited act, so far as it vests in Geo. Washington, Esq. and his heirs, the shares therein directed to be subscribed in his name, shall be, and the same is hereby, repealed.

“3. And be it further enacted, That the said shares, with the tolls and profits hereafter accruing therefrom, shall stand appropriated to such objects of a public nature, in such manner, and under such distributions, as the said George Washington, Esq. by deed during his life, or by his last will and testament, shall direct and appoint.”

In December, 1787, the Virginia Assembly passed an act “giving a more speedy remedy against delinquent subscribers to the Potomac and James River Companies.”

Concurrent act passed by the Maryland Assembly, 1787.

An amended act was passed in Virginia, December, 1790, allowing three additional years on the work above Great Falls, requiring new subscribers to pay the past calls, and that it might be lawful for persons not citizens to purchase and hold non-subscribed shares, pro-

vided that the persons so purchasing shall not thereby become citizens. (This was probably passed for the benefit of the Amsterdam investors.)

Concurrent act in Maryland, 1790.

An act passed in Virginia in 1791 required the company to at once commence to open navigation on tributary streams; also made it lawful for non-citizens to purchase shares from stockholders. To concur in an act of Maryland.

In November, 1793, the time on the work above Great Falls was extended to January, 1795. Maryland extended the time to 1798.

In 1793 an act was passed requiring boatmen to procure licenses, for which they were to pay one dollar, also,

“Every boat intended to be employed as aforesaid shall be well ceiled with strong plank, and sufficiently high to prevent the water in the bottom from damaging any part of the cargo, and shall be furnished with a tarpaulin cover, stretched over hoops in the manner of wagon covers, sufficient for defending the weather, and also with a hand pump, and shall have a plank footway upon each side of the boat, either on the outer or inside thereof, as the owner shall find most convenient, and shall be numbered; and no license shall be granted in any case unless it shall be proven to the Court that the boat is ceiled, fitted, furnished and numbered,” etc.

In 1800 Virginia decreed all fish dams and other obstructions to the navigation of the river and its branches to be nuisances and liable to destruction.

The Shenandoah Company having failed to organize under the act of 1798 the Potomac Company was authorized to take the work in January, 1802.

In 1803 an amendatory act was passed, allowing five years for completion of the work on the Shenandoah.

Another act of January, 1803, permitted the con-

struction of the locks to be twelve feet in width and provided—

“That every lock which shall hereafter be repaired or erected, shall be repaired or erected of stone, or such materials as a general meeting of the proprietors shall deem most conducive to the public interest and convenience., . . . also That, by the words ‘dry seasons,’ as used in the section referred to, were and are to be intended and understood, all seasons, so far as relates to the navigation of the said river from Fort Cumberland to tide water.”

Tobias Lear, Stevens Thompson Mason, Lawrence A. Washington, Hugh Holmes, Nicholas Fitzhugh, Osborne Sprigg and Edward McCarty were appointed commissioners to explore and review the river before November and report to the Assembly the manner in which the work is done, the depth of water in the shallowest places where the boats pass, etc. An extension of three years given in the time for completion. The company authorized to employ slaves from Maryland.

In 1811 an extension of three years was granted on the Shenandoah navigation.

In 1817 a further extension of three years was granted the Potomac Company for completion of the Potomac navigation.

January 8, 1820, it was resolved by the Assembly:

“That the board of the public works be . . . requested to inquire into the expediency of directing their principal engineer to examine the waters of the Potomac, above the upper line of the District of Columbia, with a view to ascertain and report upon the most effectual means of improving the navigation of the same; and to explore the country between the Potomac and the Ohio, on the one side, and the Potomac and the Rappahannock on the other, with a view to ascertain and report upon the practicability of effecting a communication by canals between the three rivers.”



In January, 1821:

“Whereas it is represented to the General Assembly that the Potomac Company have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the acts of the Legislatures of the States of Virginia and Maryland, incorporating the said Company, for the purpose of opening and extending the navigation of the river Potomac and its branches; and whereas it is the interest of this commonwealth that such measures should be conjointly adopted by the Legislatures of the said States as shall insure to the people thereof the attainment of the important objects for which the charter of the said Company was granted:

“ . . . The Governor of this State . . . shall appoint two commissioners to meet such commissioners as may be appointed by the Governor of Maryland, whose duty it shall be to examine into and report the state of the navigation of the said river and its branches, and whether the same has been perfected and completed according to the terms and conditions of the acts of incorporation. etc. They are further directed to inquire into and report the situation and condition of the affairs of the said Company, Etc. Etc.” Concurrent act of Maryland, Dec. 1820.

In Maryland Assembly, November session, 1792, it was enacted that slaves might be employed on either side of the Potomac, either on the public buildings in the new city of Washington or by the Potomac Company. In 1794 amended:

“That every slave brought from Virginia to Maryland, by virtue of this act, shall be carried back to Virginia within twelve calendar months from the completion of the public works, . . . and every slave not carried back, as aforesaid, shall be entitled to freedom.”

November session, 1795, the treasurer of the State was authorized to subscribe for forty shares of the augmented stock of the Potomac Company, provided that the remaining sixty shares be subscribed.



November, 1796, permitted to narrow the width of the locks at Great Falls.

November, 1797, permitted to collect tolls at the canal at Great Falls, etc.

November, 1809, a further extension of time for ten years. Also, to raise a sum of money by means of a lottery.

November, 1811, an act relative to condemnation of land, etc., on tributary streams.

State of Virginia; An Act incorporating the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company. Passed January 27, 1824.

“Whereas a navigable canal from the tide water of the river Potomac, in the District of Columbia, to the mouth of Savage Creek, on the north branch of said river, and extending thence, across the Allegany Mountains, to some convenient point of the navigable waters of the river Ohio, or some one of its tributary streams, to be fed through its course, on the east side of the mountain, by the river Potomac and the streams which empty therein, and on the western side of the mountain, and in passing over the same, by all such streams of water as may be beneficially drawn there to by feeders, dams, or any other practicable mode, will be a work of great profit and advantage to the people of this state, and of the neighboring states, and may ultimately tend to establish a connected navigation between the eastern and western waters, so as to extend and multiply the means and facilities of internal commerce and personal intercourse between the two great sections of the United States, and to interweave more closely all the mutual interests and affections that are calculated to consolidate and perpetuate the vital principles of Union: and whereas it is represented to this General Assembly, that the Potomac Company are willing and desirous that a charter shall be granted to a new company, upon the terms and conditions hereinafter expressed: and that the charter of the present company shall cease and determine:

“Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia, That, so soon as the Legislatures of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the Congress of the United States, shall assent to the provisions of this act, and the Potomac Company shall have signified their assent to the same by their corporate act, a copy whereof shall be delivered to the Executives of the several States aforesaid, and to the Treasury of the United States, there shall be appointed by the said Executives and the President of the United States, three commissioners on the part of each State, and the Government of the United States, any one of whom shall be competent to act for his respective Government. . . .

“ . . . and the said capital stock of the company hereby incorporated, shall consist of six millions of dollars, divided into sixty thousand shares, of one hundred dollars each; of which every person subscribing may take and subscribe for one or more whole shares; and such subscriptions may be paid and discharged either in the legal currency of the United States, or in the certificates of stock of the present Potomac Company, at the par or nominal value of the same, or in the claims of the creditors of the said Company, certified by the acting President and Directors to have been due, for principal and debt, on the day on which the assent of the Company shall have been signified by their corporate act, as herein before required; Provided, That the said certificates of stock shall not exceed, in the whole amount the sum of three hundred and eleven thousand one hundred and eleven dollars and eleven cents; nor the said claims the sum of one hundred and seventy five thousand eight hundred dollars; Provided, also; That the stock so paid for in certificates of the stock of the present Company, shall be entitled to dividend, only as hereinafter provided; and that no payment shall be received, in such certificate of stock, until the Potomac Company shall have executed the conveyance prescribed by the thirteenth section of this act; . . .

“Section 11; And be it enacted, That the President and directors shall, annually, or semi-annually, declare and make such dividends of the nett profits . . . as they may deem

advisable, after deducting therefrom the necessary current, and the probable contingent expenses, to be divided among the proprietors of the stock of the said company, in proportion to their respective shares., in manner following, that is to say; if such nett profits shall not exceed ten per cent, on the amount of shares, which shall have been paid for in current money of the United States, and expended on the eastern section of the said canal, then the whole thereof shall be divided among the holders of such shares, in proportion to their respective shares; but, if such nett profits shall exceed the rate of ten per cent per annum, in any year, on such amount of stock, then the surplus shall be divided among such stockholders as shall have paid for their shares in certificates of the debts of the Potomac Company, until they shall therefrom have received a dividend of six per cent; and, if a surplus yet remain, the same shall be divided among the stockholders who shall have paid for their shares in certificates of the stock of the Potomac Company, until they shall have received therefrom a dividend of six per cent per annum on such shares, etc. etc. . . .

Section 12; And be it farther enacted; That it shall be the duty of the President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, so long as there shall be and remain any creditor of the Potomac Company, who shall not have vested his demand against the same in the stock of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, to pay to such creditor or creditors, annually, such dividends, or proportion of the nett amount of the revenues of the Potomac Company, on an average of the last five years preceeding the organization of the said proposed company, as the demand of the said creditor, or creditors at this time, may bear to the whole debt of one hundred and seventy five thousand eight hundred dollars.

“Section 13; And be it farther enacted; That, whenever the Potomac Company shall have declared its assent to the provisions of this act, in the manner hereinbefore provided, it shall be lawful for the said company to surrender its charter, and convey, in due form of law, to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, hereby incorporated, all the property, rights

and privileges, by them owned, possessed, and enjoyed, under the same; and thereupon it shall be lawful to and for the said company, hereby proposed to be created, to accept such surrender and transfer, and to hold, possess, use and occupy all the property, rights and privileges, in the same manner, and to the same effect, as the said Potomac Company now hold, possess and occupy the same by law; and thereupon the charter of the said Potomac Company shall be, and the same is hereby vacated and annulled, and all the rights and powers thereby granted to the Potomac Company, shall be vested in the company hereby incorporated; and it shall be the duty of the last mentioned company, until every section of the contemplated canal shall be completed, so as to be used and enjoyed for the purposes of navigation, to keep the corresponding part of the river, in a proper state for navigation, and in good order as the same now is; and in default thereof, they shall be in all things responsible, in the same manner as the Potomac Company is now responsible."

A similar act was passed by the Legislature of the State of Maryland in December, 1824. A confirmatory act was passed by the Congress of the United States and approved in March, 1825.

A special meeting of the stockholders of the Potomac Company was called for the 16th May, 1825, at Georgetown, and

"Unanimously declared the full and free assent of the Potomac Company to the said act incorporating the said Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, and to all the provisions thereof."

Another special general meeting was called for the 10th July, 1828, at Semmes Tavern, Georgetown, to take into consideration the acts amendatory of the acts incorporating the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company and it was unanimously resolved

“That the assent and approbation of the Potomac Company is hereby given expressly to each and all of said acts, so far as the same may be deemed necessary to the validity or future operation of each and all of said acts, in as full and perfect manner as if each and all of said acts were herein specifically enumerated and recited.”

JAMES KEITH, *Chairman*.

Still another, and the last, special general meeting of the stockholders was called for the 4th August, 1828, when it was resolved

“That the President and Directors of the Potomac Company be, and they are hereby, instructed to convey, without further delay, the rights and interests of the Potomac Company to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, in conformity with the charter of the latter company, and the past resolutions of the Potomac Company.”

Accordingly on the 15th August, 1828, the conveyance was duly made and signed by John Mason, President, Jonah Thompson, John Laird and Clement Smith. C. Vowell did not for some reason sign.



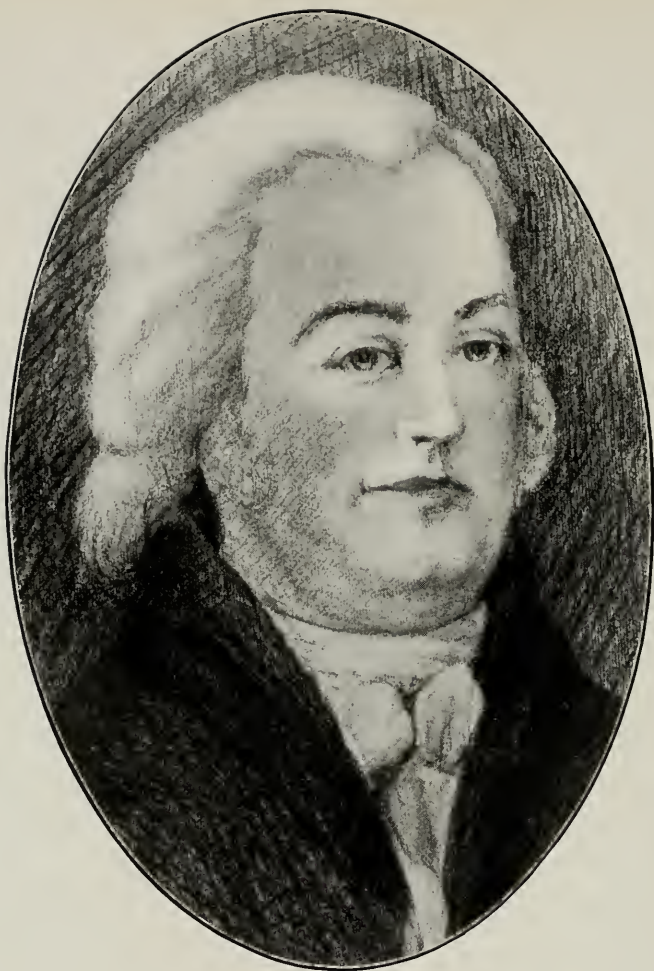


PART III.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF COLO. CHARLES  
SIMMS, GENTLEMAN, OF VIRGINIA.







*Chilsumin*

COLO. CHARLES SIMMS, GENTLEMAN

(Drawn by Mrs. J. O. Estabrook from Miniature)

## LIFE AND LETTERS OF COLO. CHARLES SIMMS, GENTLEMAN, OF VIRGINIA.

In Virginia before the War of the Revolution an ambitious young man of gentle birth found his choice of a career restricted to practically three pursuits; he might manage his own plantation and represent his parish in the House of Burgesses, he might become a surveyor and speculate in western lands, or he might take up the newly popular practice of law; colonial military service was neither attractive nor remunerative.

Charles Simms, gentleman, of Prince William County, who had acquired an unusually good education, probably at the College of William and Mary, with some fortune at his disposal, chose the law, foreseeing in the political ferment of the time an opening for legal talent, and entered the law office of Mr. Mercer, of Fredericksburg, as a student. It was, however, as an astute man of affairs that he later became prominent.

We read in the *Virginia Gazette* of May 29 of an early unfortunate business experience:

“In May 1773, or near that time I gave my bond to John Reid of Amherst Co. for 125l. currency payable in April 1774. I forewarn any person from taking said bond of Reid as I will not pay any of the money till such time as the said Reid fulfils his bargain with me. Chas. Simms.”

It is not known how it came that he was in Col. Chas. Lewis's regiment of militia, by order of Governor Dun-

more rendezvoused on the fields of Greenbrier for the advance on the hostile Indians on the Ohio; his study of law ended he may have followed the tide of emigration into the west in search of a business location, or he may have joined Capt. James Woods' independent company on the Governor's call for the militia, but he appears to have been in the little force that made the heroic nineteen days' march over the trackless, forest-covered hills to the mouth of the Kanawha in September, 1774, as it is recorded that Col. Charles Lewis died in his arms in the momentous engagement that freed Virginia from the terror of the savage foe on her frontier.

With the aid of the collection of Simms' papers in the Library of Congress supplemented by outside data we are enabled to follow his career from Point Pleasant in 1774 through the Revolutionary War—with his courtship of a lovely lady—sympathize with his troubles with western land titles, learn of his political and social friendships, his business successes and failures, to his participation in the War of 1812-14.

With his command he joined Governor Dunmore north of the Ohio and proceeded to Pittsburgh, or as it was at the moment called "Fort Dunmore," and in possession of Virginia authorities as the capital of the newly formed district of West Augusta. With the keen business insight that was characteristic he at once perceived the importance of the situation of the rough little settlement and determined to locate permanently. A bright new sign was soon swinging above a door on the one street—"Chas. Simms Counselor and Atty-at-Law." Judging from the court reports of the district litigants were not long in appearing for advice. The place was overcrowded with all the motley throng ever to be found in the outposts of civilization in time



of excitement—adventurers, hunters, traders, fugitives from settlements farther out, militia and camp followers. The life was rough, but Simms found congenial companions among the officers and agents from Virginia and formed friendships that endured throughout life. Notable among these friends were Gen. John Neville whom Governor Dunmore had placed in military command of the territory he had seized from Pennsylvania, for many years the most prominent man west of the mountains and whose family still retains the old ascendancy; John Harvie, Commissioner to treat with the conquered Indian tribes, the organizer of the Virginia land office, member of the Virginia Revolutionary conventions and of the Continental Congresses; and James Wood, Revolutionary soldier and patriot, the intrepid young envoy to the Indians of the far west, a mission which rivaled that of Washington twenty years earlier. One of the residents in this faraway settlement was Alex. Ross, who was an Indian trader and land speculator, later in the pay of the British and a friend of Dr. Connolly. He had built for himself a pretty residence on the bank of the Alleghany River; this Simms bought and with Neville and Harvie occupied “*en garçon*.” The three invested in military land warrants, which were cheap, and located many advantageously. Several they located on a beautiful island a few miles below the Fort, buying the interest of the half-breed Indian, Montour, who was in possession. Simms also purchased through Ross large tracts of land on Raccoon Creek from one Dunbar who had title from George Croghan, the noted Indian trader. Croghan had availed himself of the opportunity offered at the meeting of the tribes at Fort Stanwix to acquire immense bodies of land on the Ohio. His titles were declared void by Virginia and

Simms' efforts to perfect them occupied much of his attention for several years.

In the spring of 1776 Simms and Harvie were delegates to the convention in Williamsburg that adopted the constitution which was in force for fifty years. In November of the same year commissions were given to Wood, Neville and Simms in the Virginia line of the Continental Army. In March, 1777, Wood and Simms were commissioners for taking at Pittsburgh evidence in land trespass. Three regiments were recruited west of the mountains for the Revolutionary War; in the spring of 1777 that under the command of the three friends joined the main army under General Washington, then in headquarters near Morristown. It is worthy of note that the rough settlers on the border liberally provided for the families of the soldiers in the army; this is of record in the minutes of the court of West Augusta.

While the general outlook was so gloomy for the revolted colonies in 1777 and 1778 the young officers in camp found gay entertainment in the homes of neighborhood families. Our young Virginia major in his handsome uniform of buff and blue must have been a brave figure; not over tall, lithe and active, of the frequent blond type—it was not surprising that he should win the heart of the most beautiful and popular young lady in the county, Miss Nancy Douglass, whose father had been a major under General Schuyler in the old war. Some of the love letters written by Simms during the strenuous campaign in the Jerseys have been preserved and are models in their way.

“BRUNSWICK, July 3d. 1778.

“*My Dearest Nancy,*

“The day after the action near Monmouth Court House, I wrote you by a Militia man who lives in or near Trenton, in

which I informed you of our success in that action. Since that time I have been able to collect a more particular account of the losses on both sides.

“On our side the Killed wounded and Missing are Three hundred and Forty, on the Enemies upwards of One thousand. Two hundred and seventy of them we buried on the field, a considerable number were buried by themselves—The Grenadiers Guards and Light Infantry the Flower of the British Army were engaged and for the first time were defeated by part of the American Army. The Enemy behaved with their usual cruelty and inhumanly Bayoneted several of our men who fell into their hands, among the rest a Capt. Homes a fine young fellow from Va. The Treatment they met with from us was very different. The Officers who fell into our hands speak highly of the Clemency of the Americans. How very different were my feelings while in action, as to what they were in viewing the Field the next morning, in the heat of action I beheld with pleasure the Slaughtered foe lay on the field weltering in their blood and even enjoyed the deadly groans, but the next morning when I beheld the horrid spectacle, I could not suppress the feelings of nature; was shocked at the ghastly appearance of the dead, and lamented the Folly and Madness of men.

“Gen’l Lee is arrested for misconduct in the action and by most of the Officers who were with him is greatly censured, thus you see how precarious the reputation of an Officer is, hard to be obtained, and in a moment may be lost. The Enemy are embarking at Sandy Hook. Colo Morgan had a skirmish with a party of them the day before yesterday, he killed eighteen and took Twelve without the loss of a man on his side. The Loss of the Enemy since they evacuated Philadelphia, in killed prisoners & deserters is computed to Two thousand five hundred.

“Our Army is this far on their March to the North River. We shall cross over to the State of New York, and when I shall again have the happiness of seeing my Dearest Girl heaven only knows, but this you may be assured of, that go where I will, I shall always entertain the same ardent affection

for you that I now do, and a firm belief that you have the same Tender passion for me, constitutes my greatest happiness and as nature has bestowed on you a great share of good sense your constancy will not admit of a Doubt. You have given the greatest proof of your affection in consenting to part from the fondest of Parents, kind relations and the most amiable Friends and Companions, to go with me into a strange and distant Country. This Sacrifice you have made to Love will forever call aloud on me to endeavour to make you happy,—and believe me that if I am capable of making you so I shall never want the inclination.—

“I have always wish’d for an End to this unnatural War, but have now greater Reason to do so as it keeps me from possessing the Girl I prize more than life.

“I am in daily expectation of receiving a Letter from you, if I do not soon I shall lose all Patience. My compliments to Sister Patty, tell her I keep a sharp lookout to find a man worthy to possess so charming a Girl. Remember me to Miss B. I am much prejudiced in her favor, she has a charming countenance that indicates a Heart susceptible of every tender passion, her Friendship for you endears her to me. I hope Mrs. Douglass is made happy by the return of her Husband.

“My Compliments and best Wishes attend all Friends and am sincerely Yours

“CH. SIMMS”

“WHITE PLAINS, Aug. 6th. 1778.

“*My Dearest Life*—I rec’d your Letter by Dr. Caypole a few Days since. I am glad to find my Dear Girl is not Punctilious, trifling Punctilios between us ought by no means to be regarded, you must be convinced that the receipt of a Letter from you affords me the highest Satisfaction and I have not a doubt but you are always anxious to hear from me, I shall therefore omit no opportunity of writing to you, and must entreat you to continue your Favors by every opportunity. Should I by any fortuitous event be prevented from writing to you a greater length of time than usual, pray don’t construe it as a slight or neglect. Your Charms and my

ardent Affection is a sufficient security against anything of that sort. I sincerely congratulate your Brother and Sister on the birth of their daughter and heartily Join with you in wishing that the dear little Pledge of their Love may live to be an Ornament to her sex and a Comfort to them in their old Age. . . . You desire I would return to you as soon as I can consistant with my Duty, you may rely on it I will, nothing but that shall keep me a moment from you, for nowhere else can I be happy. I still flatter myself that the Enemy will withdraw themselves from the Continent in a short time, and then my dear Nancy my whole time shall be devoted to you.

“There is very little News in Camp worth telling, but such a it is you shall have. The French Fleet have block’d up Rhode Island, the Enemy had not time to get all their Vessels off, they burnt the King Fisher and two Row Gallies, and a good many small Craft. The British Troops on the Island retired to Newport and we expect every day to hear of their being captured by Gen’l Sullivan who has a very considerable Army near them. Last Monday a fire broke out in the City of New York and it is said forty Houses were consumed. I was on the Enemy’s lines with a detachment at the time and saw the fire very plain but did not know at that time it was in the City.

“I am much obliged to your Brother George for his endeavors to procure the articles I wrote for; I am glad he did not get them, as a considerable quantity of Goods are sent from the State of Virginia for their Officers, & I expect . . . on better terms than he could procure them for me.

“Remember me to all Friends and believe me to be

“Sincerely and Forever Yours, &c.

“CH. SIMMS.”

“P. S. Aug. 8th.

“I expected the happiness of receiving a Letter from you by Major Hopkins but was disappointed, do let me have the pleasure of hearing from you by every opportunity. I am rejoiced to hear your Health is pretty well recovered. Adieu my Dear Girl.”



“WHITE PLAINS, Aug. 9th. 1778.

“My Dearest Nancy,

“I wrote you a few days since by Colo. Green which I hope you have received. I am afraid you will think me troublesome in writing so often, believe me my Dear Girl it gives me the most sensible pleasure to write to you, and am sorry that I shall not have so frequent Opportunities of enjoying that pleasure, as I have heretofore had. A Light Infantry Corps is to be composed immediately, his Excellency has Honored me with a Command in that Corps, and of course shall be detached from the main Army, so that I shall not have such frequent opportunities of sending Letters to you, but be assured I shall with pleasure embrace every opportunity that offers. I hope there is no necessity of begging you to write frequently to me, you will direct to me, in the Light Infantry Corps.

“I am my Dearest Girl with unfeigned Affection,

“Your devoted H’ble Serv’t,

“CH. SIMMS.”

In a New Jersey newspaper of the 28th of December, 1778, we can read this interesting announcement:

“Married on Tuesday se’n-night in this place Charles Simms Esq. Lieutenant-Colonel of the 2nd. Virginia Regiment, to the truly amiable Miss Nancy Douglass, daughter of Mr. William Douglass, late of the City of New York.”

In the same paper three weeks later Simms advertised for sale land on the Ohio River 15 miles below Pittsburgh and warranted the titles. The young lady’s dower seems to have been her father’s Virginia military warrant for 5,000 acres of land.

Reports of the animosity of the Pennsylvania courts to Virginia land titles continually harrassed Simms; he had been obliged to relinquish the lovely island through Richard Butler’s interpretation of the terms of the Stanwix treaty with the Indians, as being west



of the Ohio. We can surmise his grim satisfaction years after on learning of the scalping of the officious Indian agent. The added necessity for his personal supervision of the selection and surveying of the 5,000-acre warrant induced him to ask for a leave of absence.

“PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 6, 1779.

“TO THE HONBLE. THE PRESDT. OF CONGRESS;

“*Sir*; I am so circumstanced as to be under the necessity of retiring from the Army for some time and have therefore taken the liberty of addressing you on the subject. My principal reason for requesting leave of absence is this; The Assembly of Virginia have opened a Land Office for granting the waste and unappropriated Lands within the State; The greater part of the Property I Possess consists in Lands on the Waters of the Ohio, which I claim by improvements &c and which are unpatented; there is a limited time allowed by the Assembly for ascertaining such claims. I must therefore request leave of absence to attend to that business,—what time it will take to transact it I cannot say; but I will join the Army again as soon as I possibly can with any degree of conveniency.

“I am Sir, Your Obdt. Hble. Servt.

“CHAS. SIMMS, *Lt. Colo. 2nd. Va. Regt.*”

This request was referred to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

“PHILA. Aug. 8th. 1779.

“TO GEN’L WASHINGTON,

“*Sir*;—Herewith enclosed is a copy of a letter from Colo. Simms respecting leave of absence. Congress refers this request to your Excellency—The Colonel will be the bearer of this letter & will more fully explain the reasons of his applying to Congress in the first instance.

“I have the honour to be with Great Respect and Esteem,  
ete. “JOHN JAY.”

Simms continued on to Headquarters at West Point and presented his letters to the Commander-in-Chief.

This reminder of the unsatisfactory condition of his own western lands and of his personal sacrifices tried the General's temper; he administered a sharp reprimand to the young colonel and refused to grant a leave of absence or to accept a resignation of his commission. He replied to Congress as follows:

“WEST POINT, Aug. 19, 1779.

“TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS,

“*Sir*—I had the honour to day to receive your Letter of the 8th. by Lieut. Colo. Simms of the 2d. Virginia Regiment with a copy of a Letter from him to your Excellency and of an order of Congress on the 7th. in consequence. The Indulgence requested by Colo. Simms however interesting it may be to himself, appears to me so incompatible with the Public Service and to involve, and to lead to, so many disagreeable consequences, that I have thought it my duty to refuse it.

“Were the point to rest with him, from the circumstances of his Regiment in respect to Field Officers, his request might be granted, without any material injury, but this cannot be expected, as there are many other Officers in the same line who have the same pretensions. And it is difficult if not impossible, for me to determine with precision, where such applications would stop, as they might be made upon the same principles and with as much propriety by every Officer and by every soldier in the Army. Those who have not already surveyed lands or done some act to acquire a title of ownership, may urge if they incline so to do, that it is time they should and insist that they will not neglect the opportunity longer.

“I have very fully and explicitly pointed out to Colo. Simms the probable or at least the possible consequences which would flow from a compliance with his request; but he says he cannot decline it and waits on Congress to resign his Commission which I refused to accept.

“In justice to Lieut. Colo. Simms I must observe that he is a brave, intelligent and good Officer, and I am sorry that any circumstances should have arisen in his affairs to compel

him either to resign his Commission or to make a request so inconsistent with the Public interest.

“I have the Honour to be

“With the Greatest Esteem and Respect

“Your Excellencys Most Obt. Servt.

“GEO. WASHINGTON.”

Simms was persistent and again addressed Congress :

“PHILA. Sept. 2d. 1779.

“*Sir*;—On my application to Congress some time past for leave of absence they were pleased to refer me to his Excellency, Gen’l. Washington.—

“The General for some particular reason did not think proper to grant the Indulgence I requested nor would he accept of my resignation, but referred me to Congress.—As the matter now stands wholly with them, I must beg leave to point out more particularly the necessity I am under of being absent from the Army than I did in my first Letter.

“In the Year 1775 I became the purchaser under Colo. Croghan of between three and four thousand acres of Land in the neighborhood of Fort Pitt, being part of a Tract he purchased from the Indians upwards of thirty years ago.—It was my intention when I made the purchase to settle on and improve the Lands, which under the Laws of Virginia would have sav’d them, but was prevented from doing so by entering into the Continental Service in 1776—The Assembly of Virginia at their last Session determined all titles to Lands derived from Indians to be void.—Yet Sir I have reason to think if I attend at their next Sitting, which is the first Monday in October next, I can obtain from them a confirmation of my title to the above mentioned Lands, for I can’t suppose they will suffer me to lose so considerable a part of my property, by devoting my time and services to the Publick, when they have it in their power to redress me.

“I would beg leave to suggest to you that there are a large porportion of Officers to the number of men in the Virginia line, and that they are now present with the Regt. I belong to as it stands—incorporated with others, one Colo. and two

Majors. so that it is hardly probable the Reg't will suffer by my absence and I think it must appear pretty evident to every person that unless I attend to my own Business this Fall I must lose considerably, which consideration will I make no doubt, justify me in the opinion of all reasonable men for requesting Leave of Absence at this Juncture.

"His Excellency conceiving a number of Officers to be in the same predicament with myself was the Reason of his not granting me leave of absence—I can't help observing, that there are very few if any whose circumstances so urgently require their immediate attention to their private Business as mine do; and if there are any (if I may be allowed to judge from my own feelings) they will be reduced to the necessity of resigning their Commissions, unless they obtain Leave of Absence, and I leave you to determine, whether it is not better to part with Officers for a short time than altogether,—

"Permit me to assure you Sir, that it is with the greatest reluctance I trouble the Honble. Congress with a matter that concerns me only as an individual, and that I shall cheerfully acquiesce in their determination respecting me. If I am reduced to the disagreeable necessity of leaving the Army, I shall do it with the consciousness of having serv'd my Country to the utmost of my abilities as long as I could possibly without involving myself and family in ruin and distress.

"I am Sir, with the utmost sincere Esteem and Respect,

"Your Obt Humle Servt, CHAS. SIMMS."

The letters from Gen. Washington and Simms were referred to a committee of three, who reported favorably, and Simms obtained leave until November. The following letter however was addressed to the Virginia Assembly, which probably had its influence in determining Simms to leave the army.

"IN CONGRESS, Sept. 4th. 1779.

"The Committee to whom were referred the letter from Genl. Washington & Colo. Simms brought in a report, Whereupon,—

*Resolved*;—That leave of absence from his Regiment be given Colo. Simms till the twentieth day of November next.

“That copies of this application to Congress and Genl. Washington’s letter be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Virginia and that it be Signified to him that as Lieut. Colo. Simms’ application has been complied with at a time when his absence is with the greatest reluctance dispensed, it is the wish of Congress he may be enabled to rejoin his Regiment as speedily as possible; and that such measures may be taken respecting claims similar to that of Colo. Simms’ as may prevent other officers of the Virginia Line making applications for the like indulgence of absence, which must in the midst of a Campaign, be utterly inadmissable and that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor of Virginia.

“Extract from the Minutes of Congress.

“(Signed) CHAS. THOMPSON, Sec’y.”

“PRINCE WILLIAM CO. VIRGINIA NOV. 8, 1779

“TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS;

“*Sir*, I am extremely sorry that my Circumstances will not admit of my joining the Army again. I find by woeful experience, if I pay that attention to my duty as an Officer which is necessary, that my family must inevitably be reduced to want, and although I have the warmest attachment to the Glorious Cause in which I have been long engaged, yet I cannot think of reducing those to distress who have a right to look up to me for comfort and support.

“I must therefore begg leave to resign my Commission which you will find inclosed.

“I hope I shall be believed when I assure you that nothing but the most pressing necessity should induce me to part with a Commission which I have held so long.

“Perhaps it may be necessary to inform you that I settled my Accounts with the Auditors (*for the money*, erased) last Sept.

“I am Sir with due Respect. &c. CH. SIMMS.”



We find the following in the Journal of the House of Delegates of the Virginia Assembly for Oct. 16, 1779:

“A memorial of Chas. Simms was presented to the House and read setting forth that he hath a claim to 2,961 acres of land on the Ohio River and Raccoon Creek which proceeds by purchase from George Croghan whose title was founded on a purchase from the Six Nations;—that the said lands have been improved, but he apprehended . . . (illegible) and settlements, and have it not in their power to ascertain their claims within the time limited by law; and praying that his claim aforesaid may be established, and that a law may pass to secure the rights to officers and soldiers of lands on the western waters, allowing them a reasonable time to prove and ascertain their claims after they are discharged from the service.”

Again, Oct. 19, 1779:

“The opinion of the committee is, That the memorial of Lieut. Colo. Chas. Simms praying that his title to 2,961 acres of land lying on the Ohio River which he Purchased from Alex, Ross and Wm. Dunbar may be confirmed, having been prevented from improving said lands as by law is required by being in the Continental Army ever since the year 1776 and that he might obtain grants for the said lands upon paying the usual composition money under the former government, is reasonable.”

Leaving his amiable wife in the family home in Prince William County Simms again went to the west, where he probably remained for a year or more, surveying and locating lands. Another disagreeable surprise awaited him in the Pittsburgh courts—now in the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania—in a suit to enforce the payment of notes he had given Ross for the lands he had yet to prove up in the Virginia land office, the state having seized all of the Ross effects. A journey to Philadelphia was then necessary to seek justice



from the Supreme Council; his petition can be read in the Colonial Records of the state. It must be remembered that these over-the-mountain journeys in the eighteenth century were no pleasure excursions of a few hours but long and tedious as well as perilous weeks in the saddle. After a long delay the Pennsylvania higher courts cancelled his "bonds." During the sojourn in the west at that time he located many thousand acres of fine land on the Ohio, in Kentucky and western Virginia; nine hundred acres of the Douglass warrant he located on the island, covering what he had previously located and purchased in 1775. Again Harvie and Neville were his partners, through his generosity, for they had no claim in equity to the new title.

Business interests indicated a permanent residence at Pittsburgh, but life in the frontier settlement would be rough and altogether unsuited to his refined and cultivated wife, so for their home he selected Alexandria, a lively Virginia port on the Potomac. There by his ability and fortune he at once took a prominent position as a citizen, while the fair Nancy with her beauty, which is still a memory in Alexandria, and her tact won all hearts and led the fashion.

But the titles to western lands never ceased to annoy. In 1783 the Pennsylvania Assembly granted to General Irvine as a testimonial to his great military services a pre-emption right to the Island, later giving him a patent. General Irvine disregarded Simms's protests and evicted the tenant in possession; and thus began one of the famous American land cases, which with one other quieted all the titles in dispute on account of the conflicting claims of Virginia and Pennsylvania previous to the final location of boundaries. The story of this suit is one of the most romantic in all land litiga-

tion and would itself furnish material for an interesting volume and would include the names of all the famous Virginia lawyers of the time. It was finally decided in Simms' favor by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1800.

Naturally John Harvie in the land office at Richmond was greatly interested.

“RICHMOND, Feb'y 4th. 1784.

“*Dear Sir*, The weather has been so severe as to prevent the Regular passing of the Post Rider which delay'd your Letter of the 11th ultimo from reaching my hands till the last post day. As I understand Colo. Neville is of the Executive Council in Pennsylvania I hope he will pay proper attention to our Interest in Montour's Island. I am glad you sent to him the Entrys under which we claim it. I also wrote to him on the same Subject.

“The Receipt I sent you was a sufficient voucher that the Land Office Warrants had been issued for the use of Mr. Watson and the Register's fee not paid, but whether he or another satisfys them is Immaterial to me, Mr. Watson from his general character will take Early methods for their speedy adjustment.

“Writs of Escheat do not issue from the Land Office and in no case within the District of the Northern Neck has this Office power or authority over their vacant or escheated Lands. Warrant from me cannot be located on them as . . . issue neither is there any mode existing in Law for acquiring (as I can perceive) vacant or Escheated Property within the Northern Neck. The Power and Authority of the late Lord Fairfax Land Office expired with him & it has not since been revived in any other person, therefore till something is determined respecting his Charter by the Legislature all Lands I think must remain with yours in statu quo.

“I am Dr. Sir Yr. Most Obt Servt.

“J. HARVIE.”

It does not appear that Neville ever exerted himself to save the island for himself and friends, yet it has

ever since been known by his name—perhaps the delicacy of his official position deterred him from publicly assisting the Virginia claimants.

“RICHMOND May 10, 1785.

“*Dear Sir*—I am extremely glad to hear that you are a member of the Assembly and that you will attend at the next session, as this circumstance only I believe will ever allow us to enjoy a few weeks of that friendly Intercourse that once strongly subsisted between us and which I shall ever feel myself fond of cultivating, for the longer we live in the World the more certain we find it to be a fact that our early friendships are the most lasting and agreeable.

“I really know not what to observe to you upon the extraordinary and unprecedented Law that has lately passed the Assembly of Pennsylvania respecting Montour’s Island. I suppose they are at all events determined to wrest it from us in favour of Genl. Irvine and this being the case our only resort must be to the Interposition of our Legislatures and in order to lay the matter fully and properly before them I think you ought by all means to procure a survey upon the Warrants you located in the year 1780 and also a copy of the survey that was made for us by Colo. Crawford provided it can now be found upon his Books and if not there to be found a certificate of the Survey from those that attended him as chain carriers, perhaps it might not also be amiss to obtain from Philadelphia a Copy of Butler’s Letter and an answer with the Depositions that were sent to the Committee of Congress from Indian affairs on that subject. If these cannot readily be obtained the survey was of such notoriety in Pittsburg we surely cannot be at a loss to prove it having actually been made, I think a copy of the survey was delivered to me by Colo. Crawford but whether I returned it, gave it to you, or I mislaid it is a matter of doubt. Yet it may be well for both you and me to search over our old papers which on my part I will immediately do, But I am afraid if its found it will rather make against than in favor of our claim, as I think it will appear to be . . . or Military

Warrant for only 50 acres, and if it should appear on the face of the survey we must not attempt to use it on the Tryal and general evidence that a survey was made for us will be much more to our advantage.

“I am Sir, Yr most Obt Servt

“J. HARVIE.

“Note. Is there no bringing about a composition with Genl. Irvine so as to Induce him to Relinquish his claim to this Island and ask for the Bounty of his State somewhere else. I think if I had a pleasant acquaintance with him I could bring it about.”

Among the Simms papers are many letters from John Marshall, with whom Simms evidently had much legal business; some of these are of general interest.

“RICHMOND, June 16, 1784.

“*Dear Sir*; I received your two favors—the one on the subject of the petition and the other inclosing a bond. Mr. Henderson promised to write you immediately to let you know that by a standing order of the House no petition concerning private property could be received till it had been published in the County and in the Gazette. If this is done by the next session I flatter myself we may be able to carry it through the House.

“I see no prospect of amending the mode of distributing justice in this Commonwealth. The Circuit Court system meets with too much opposition from selfish individuals to be adopted. Those Magistrates who are tenacious of authority will not assent to anything which may diminish their ideal dignity and put into the hands of others a power which they will not exercise themselves. Such of the County Courts’ lawyers too as are suspicious that they do not possess abilities sufficient to enable them to stand before Judges of Law are opposed from motives of interest to any plan which may put the distribution of Justice into the hands of Judges. Every attempt to amend or alter the County Court Establishment has been alike ineffectual. Indeed there are many members who really appear to be determined against every measure

which may expedite and facilitate the business of recovering debts and compelling a strict compliance with Contracts. These are sufficient to throw impediments in the way of any improvements in our Judisiary system though they are not so powerful as to shut up our Courts altogether.

“A Bill is now pending under the consideration of the House which has employed its ablest Members and will I believe end in being printed for the consideration of the People; ’tis to restrict vessels from foreign Nations to certain Ports. Norfolk and Alexandria are the two which are now in consideration. ’Tis calculated to agrandize very much those two commercial Towns, and should it be adopted will I trust produce many happy effects.

“We seem at length determined to hold but one Session in the year, a Bill for that purpose has gone through a Committee of the Whole House, it has not yet passed into a Law, but the greatest obstacles are I hope surmounted.

“As soon as the Assembly rises I shall go up to Fauquier—my present plan is to pass my summers there and my winters here, I am uncertain whether or not ’twill hold in practice. Present my compliments to your Lady.

“I am Dear Sir, with the greatest Esteem, Your &c. &c.

“J. MARSHALL.”

Simms was a member of the Virginia Assembly in 1786, 1793 and 1797. Mrs. Simms spent the winter of 1786 in New York with her mother and sister; her letters then written are filled with innocent and interesting gossip.

“NEW YORK, Feb.y 5th. 1786.

“My Dearest Charleses Letter by Colo Lee was delivered to me by him yesterday he tells me Mrs Lee was prevented from coming with him by sickness—But that he expects her as soon as the weather and roads will permit—by that time I hope I shall be in Alexandria with my Dear Kitty, I have been quite uneasy since the receipt of a letter from Mrs Swan Dated Jan.y 23rd which contains an account of my lov’d girls having the fever and ague, Colo Lee tells me you have got



home—this has made me more easy on my Kittys account since I cannot be with her myself, I think you the most proper person as your affection I am sure will induce you to take every possible Care of her dear precious health, your son is perfectly well and is such a Chatter box that I can scarcely write. . . .

“You write that you had seen Mrs Mayo and that she was gayest where all were gay—I am not surprised to hear it—for if I am not mistaken, External accomplishments were more attended to by Mrs Mayo than internal ones, this was the opinion I form’d of her on my first acquaintance and I never from her conduct had reason to alter that opinion—You will smile no Doubt when I tell you that she has wrote to her Mother to send her by the first vessel that sails from here to Virginia some Indian and Buckwheat meal—if she had only wrote for the Indian meal, I should have thought, Knowing her satirical turn, that she meant a reflexion on the Ancient Dominion, But as she has also wrote for Buckwheat I must confess I can no more understand what she could mean than when she talk’d french to me at Trenton. . . .”

Simms was undoubtedly a leader in every public enterprise of the bustling little city in which he had his home. In 1786 the academy was founded with Washington, Stuart, Chas. Lee, Simms and nine other trustees—the shares were 5 l. each annually; in 1789 Simms and sixteen other citizens were empowered by the Assembly to raise 1500 l. by lottery for paving the principal streets—perhaps the ancient boulders on Washington St. date from that lottery; in 1792 he secured an act incorporating the Bank of Alexandria with a capital of \$150,000; he was an original stockholder in the Potomac Company, in the Marine Insurance Co., in several turnpike companies, etc. He seems to have been interested in all important state suits at law as counsel and on terms of pleasant intimacy with all prominent families in Virginia and Maryland. He



was a Mason in good standing and a Vestryman of old Christ Church. In 1788 he was a delegate to the convention which adopted the national constitution and on the committee of amendments. His wife's letters give his position on the question of adoption.

“ALEXANDRIA, June 16th 1788.

“*My Dear Charles*, Your letter of the 12th. instant I rec'd friday—I fear you will not be at home by the end of this month, as you write that there is but little progress made in the business you are upon—our dear children are very well—I think John thrives as perceptibly as the “Scarcity Root” and that is saying much for him—for that grows astonishingly. . . .

“I am much obliged to you for your goodness in offering to get me Elegant Bracelets—and I should certainly prefer those done with hair—if done with yours, and the Children's hair—but I think I will decline getting any of either kind, when I requested you to get them, I expected they would not be more than three dollars—if I had imagined they would cost more I should not have thought of them,—if you will Bring yourself by the last of the month I will readily excuse your not getting me any kind of Bracelets. . . .

“With my best wishes for your very precious health and speedy return—I remain Your grateful and affectionate wife

“N. SIMMS.”

Probably she received the bracelets made from the hair of her loved ones.

“ALEXANDRIA, Sunday June 8th. 1788.

“I rec'd a letter from my dear Charles yesterday dated th 4th of June—am happy to hear you are well, and must beg you will use every precaution to keep yourself so—I have always heard Richmond was an unhealthy situation and as you are subject to Bilious complaints I have my fears for you. . . .

“I am no politician—But am pleased to hear the new Constitution is likely to be adopted, as I pay great deference to

your opinion and judgment in weighty matters and as you think it will Conduce to the happiness and Prosperity of America—I have not a doubt but it will. . . .

“I am very glad to hear Mr Hughes has arrived safe in Kentucky—from the alarming accounts of the Hostilities of the indians about the time I thought he must have gone I was afraid he would never have reached there. . . .

“The most agreeable intelligence which your letter contains is that you expect to be at home before the end of this month—that you may not be deceived in the (to me flattering expectation) is the sincere wish of your affectionate Wife—

“NANCY SIMMS.

“N. B. Please to make my compliments to the Ladies in Richmond with whom I am acquainted—Mrs Randolph Mrs Mayo and Miss Fairfax—Kitty and Douglass send their loves to you.”

These letters give us an insight into the admirable disposition of the beautiful lady and account for the always loverlike solicitude of her husband.

Thus wrote Edmund Randolph after the convention:

“*Dear Sir*; Being now at liberty to resume a part of my former profession and finding it necessary for my convenience to go to the Court of Appeals under its new establishment I beg leave to inform you of this circumstance. I shall also be ready to give advice, to state cases for argument and occasionally but not constantly, to go to any of the District or Superior Court. In short I would undertake any business which might not require an absence from home. A letter directed to Mr. John Brown of Richmond will be forwarded to me in Williamsburg by the stage and an answer will be returned through an agent whom I shall appoint.”—Etc.

Randolph was not permitted to remain long in the privacy of his Williamsburg home, being appointed Attorney-General for the United States by President Washington in 1789.

With Charles Lee Simms had many business transactions and legal affairs. They were jointly interested in 200,000 acres of land in Randolph County; as Attorney-General from 1795 Lee was of great service in the suit for the possession of Montour's Island at Pittsburgh. This letter from Philadelphia dated Sept 9, 1791, refers to the suit:

“*Dear Sir*; I attended the Board of Property in your contest with Mr. Sheen. He, or rather one Wright has sent down some papers which miscarried; I thought it better therefore to assent to what the Board would have ordered of themselves that the trial should be postponed to the first Monday in January when it is to be peremptorily had. . . . The temper of the Board with respect to Virginia rights is much changed by the discussion in Gist's case. I did not choose to leave such a subject to their memories only but I committed it at large to paper. They declared they had never before understood the Virginia rights and unanimously gave Gist all that he asked for. This is a conversion which bears a kind aspect on all the Virginia claimants, because every title which would be supported then will now be countenanced here, unless a prior title from Pennsylvania shall thwart it. . . .

“P. S. Irvine is fumbling out an answer, and the co-ertion of law is too feeble to permit me to press him too close, lest he should fly the way and create greater delays.”

Which he did and the case was not finally disposed of until 1800. Descendants of the Simms and Neville families still retain holdings on the beautiful and valuable island.

With Charles Lee, Simms was chosen to authenticate and interpret the will of General Washington; he had been one of the honorary pall bearers at the funeral and his name is first on the memorial in Christ Church in Alexandria.

Thos. Swann wrote him from Richmond, Dec. 24, 1799:

*"Dear Sir;* Your favor I received yesterday. We had heard of Gen'l Washington's death by Maj. West and I am happy to inform you that we have paid every respect to his memory that his great character demanded. The resolution of the House on the subject you have no doubt seen, it was drawn and presented by Mr. Madison; we also by another resolution walked in procession on Sunday last to attend divine service and a sermon prepared for the occasion."

The following is a leaf from an almost forgotten period of our history:

"I, George Doneal, clerk of Fairfax County, do hereby certify that the bearer here-of, Sarah, a yellow woman aged 24 years, 5 feet, 5 inches high, slender made and her children was lately a slave belonging to Geo. Washington, Esq. who by his last will and testament devised her to Martha Washington during life, who by an instrument of writing duly proved and recorded in said court hath released the said Sarah from the service due her. Sarah's children, Lucy, 2 years old—Lewis, 1 year old."

Perhaps the most arduous public work done by Chas. Simms was with the "Patowmack Company" for improving the navigation of the river and opening an easy communication with the western country. This was the pioneer enterprise for securing the Ohio country trade, its accomplishment Washington's life-long effort. The work of the Company at the Great Falls of the Potomac was the most important engineering feat of the eighteenth century. Simms had promptly responded to the request of General Washington in 1785 and subscribed for stock; he punctually met the frequent assessments and always voted his own stock at the annual meetings, but he does not appear to have taken any active part in the management until he became a director in 1802; he remained on the board until 1807, when he was elected president, serving in





HARPER'S FERRY, SHOWING FIRST ARSENAL BUILDINGS  
(Rare English Engraving of 1800)





that capacity until 1814 when in order to assist in the litigation of an important case, he sold his stock and left the Company. For twelve years he had guided its affairs through such financial stress as the country has not since experienced.

His elder sons were educated at Princeton; a son and a daughter married into the family of his old friend, General Neville, a daughter married the son of Levin Powell, a Federalist congressman from Virginia, who wrote Simms many political letters worthy of reproduction. Simms himself was a notable Federalist and had much distrust of Jefferson; as a national elector in 1796 he favored the election of Patrick Henry "as the one safe man."

Western lands were a continual annoyance; the brilliant Presley Neville writing from Pittsburgh in October, 1801:

"Regrets inability to remit a collection. . . . We have no news, money scarce as usual. I was at the Island two days ago and your part stands exactly where it did, without the least change. I will venture to say your tenant will do it no injury as he is too lazy to cut a stick unless from absolute necessity. My respects to Mrs. Simms."

Philanthropic appeals did not pass him by:

"ALEXANDRIA, Octo. the 18th. 1788.

"*Sir*;—There is an orphan lad in town, an apprentice to one Ramsay, a Joyner, who I have reason to believe is not well used and whom his friends wish to have on that account taken away. His name is John Donaldson. I shall therefore be glad if you will apply to the Court next week in his behalf and on his making his ill treatment appear it is hoped that he will be removed and that it will not be again put off for further trial. I have enclosed 24s. and am Sir, etc.

"BRYAN FAIRFAX."

This interesting letter is from the John Hughes, who with mother and sisters went from Alexandria to try his fortunes in Kentucky and who represented Simms in his land transactions there.

“DANVILLE, March 30th 1792.

“*Dear Sir*, Enclosed is the copy of the bill ‘Ash against you.’ Isaac Hite has been sick ever since I came home which has prevented me from seeing him. I think as you are unacquainted with the nature of your claim it will be necessary to make J. H. a Defendant—therefore it will be best for you to send me a formal answer stating in what manner he is interested and that he has transacted the whole business.

“Perhaps from the information I gave you when at your house you will expect me to say something about *Mrs. Hughes*—but alas, I have met with the fate not uncommon to absent Lovers—I mean, the being *jilted*. But however I endeavor to bear my fate with *Christian Fortitude*.

“Our convention which is to meet on Monday next will I am afraid committ many blunders. County Committees composed of very many ignorant & some bad men have borne the sway in our Elections. The exclusion of Lawyers not from the Legislature only but from the barr, the abolition of Slavery, and low salaries to the officers of Government, and that to be paid in produce, the committees it is expected will insist much upon. It will be a new scene to see a Chief Judge at the end of a term, riding upon a bag of corn & driving home the cows & calves he has received for this quarters Salary. And the Governor trudging home with a basket of Eggs upon his arm. One man has offered to serve for £25 per annum, and to receive that in corn, and from the best authority, I mean his own, information, I am taught to believe he was a great man in a northern State.—

“My mother & sister are well & much pleased with the Country. Etc.

“P. S. I think it is probable as I am not now to be bound in the Silken bonds of love I shall cross the mountain again in the Fall.”

Simms was the confidant of many of the dissatisfied Federalist politicians during the Democratic administrations of Jefferson and Madison; J. Stratton evidently took the situation very seriously.

“WASHINGTON, Feb’y 5—1803.

“*Dear Sir*, Conformable to my promise I have procured for yourself and Mr Swann each a bed; one in my room & the other contiguous to it—On Wednesday next I bid adieu to Washington and with it I take a final leave of politics; on that subject I shall endeavor never again to discourse or even think, when I look back at what is past the scene is humiliating and disgusting, and when I look forward the prospect is hideous and disgraceful, that I think it the wisest plan to shut my eyes and close away if possible the dark night which is coming on. There was once a Constitution, there were formerly checks and balances to confine the different departments of Government within their proper spheres, but these are past away as a tale that is told,—all power is now vested in the House of Representatives and if I may hazard a last political sentiment I will say the most pernicious and destructive to the Happiness of Mankind is the Tyranny of a public body where responsibility being divided among many is felt by none.

“I find I have wandered farther in politics than I intended, it is the effect of the melancholy review I have just taken of our measures previous to writing my circular.

“I will thank you to write by first mail when the Norfolk packet sails, I feel disposed to purchase a Horse but the state of my finances will not allow it without your aid, could you get the enclosed note discounted in your bank so that I could get the money by you on Monday without inconvenience to y’r self.

“My best respects attend Mrs Simms and y’r family—  
Y’r friend

“J. STRATTON

“P. S.

“The note will with great certainty be taken up before due.”

There was a warm friendship existing between Henry Lee (Light Horse Harry) and Simms; the latter frequently assisted the old warrior financially, he also took subscriptions for his "Memoirs." The following is from a letter dated Dec. 6, 1807:

" . . . I received your letter enclosing one from Col. Mercer and I thank you and him for the trouble you take to enlighten me with facts, though I am surprised you should have named me for my work being written with much freedom will occasionally displease and I have no desire to engage in such in my last period of life.

"Will you tell me to what regiment you belonged or commanded when you went to reinforce Col. Smith at Mud Island? In reviewing my work I find a blank left for this designation—and also tell me to what state and regiment Col. Greene, the hero of Ft. Mercer belonged.

"Also I wish you to see Gilpin and to negotiate with him for my debts. I will give him good lands. At all events get the execution in your hands and the power to bargain with me, then I go and exert myself where I may be useful. Let me see you here after breakfast."

From a later letter:

"I fear you do not regard my injunction as to my name, the Memoirs of the Southern War are nearly finished and are written with too much freedom for the times. It will appear without my name.

"I wish I was near two or three of my friends that I might get the good of their perusal and amendments. This is not practicable and I shall put the last touch to the performance in a few weeks. It will be published by subscription and I reckon upon your aid in your town as holder of the subscription paper, etc. Tell me whether you will take the trouble? Carrington in Richmond and some other such men elsewhere."

Simms was early appointed collector of customs at Alexandria, which was a somewhat lucrative post until

European warfare drove all commerce off the seas. He was mayor of the city during the British occupation in 1814. He prudently sent his family into the country and wrote his wife daily accounts of the situation.

“ALEXANDRIA, Aug. 28—1814.

“*My Dear Nancy*—I have the pleasure to inform you that the enemy retreated last night from the City without paying Alexandria the Compliment of a visit—We have nothing now to apprehend but the approach of their vessels. I rec’d an express this morning informing me that Two Frigates, a Sloop of War and Two Tenders were off Maryland point at 7 o’clock yesterday morning. I am not without hope that they may not come up as high as the Fort as their object has been effected by the destruction of the public buildings in the City.”

“Sept. 3d. 1814.

“The British Squadron began to fall down the river yesterday morning and was not as low as the Fort this morning except one vessel which the day before yesterday went down in the neighborhood of the White House, and a pretty heavy firing has been kept up this morning in that neighborhood. Mr. Cook has gone into the vicinity of the White House and on his return will be able to give you a full account of the state of things there. Alexandria has so far had a most providential escape. It is impossible that men could behave better than the British behaved while the town was in their power, not a single inhabitant was insulted or injured by them in their persons or homes. Your fear that something might occur to provoke them to fire the Town was not ill founded. The day before yesterday Capt. Porter, Lieut. Creighton and Lieut. Platt naval officers rode into Town like furies and seized on a poor unarmed midshipman, a mere stripling and would have carried him off or killed him had not his neck-handkerchief broke and he escaped from them. This rash act excited the greatest alarm among the Inhabitants of the Town, women and children running and screaming through the



streets and hundreds of them lay out all night without shelter.

"I immediately prepared a message to the Commodore explaining the manner and circumstances of the insult and sent it on board by Mr Swann and Edmund I. Lee, While I was paring the message one of the Captains entered into the parlour with the strongest expressions of rage in his countenance, bringing with him the midshipman who had been so valiantly assaulted by those gallant Naval Officers. I explained to him by whom the outrage was committed, that the Town had no control over them and ought not to be held responsible for their conduct and that I was at that time preparing a message of explanation to the Commodore. He said it was necessary it should be explained, after which his fury seemed to abate and he went off. Before Mr Swann and Mr Lee got on board the Signal of Battle was hoisted and as the vessels were prepared for action when Mr Swann and Mr Lee made their explanation the Commodore said he was satisfied and ordered the Signal of Battle to be lowered. Thus the Town was providentially preserved from destruction by the accidental circumstance of the midshipman's neck-handkerchief giving way, for had he been killed or carried off I do not believe the Town would have been saved from destruction.

"I do not consider the Town perfectly safe yet. If the British vessels should be prevented from passing the White House they, or some of them may probably return here, and wait untill troops sufficient to drive off the militia, &c at the White House shall come to their relief from Patuxent and in that case this part of the country will become the seat of war. I cannot therefore wish your return untill we are in a more quiet state."

Possibly the mayor's suave diplomacy saved Alexandria from Washington's fate.

An affectionate father, his children occasionally took advantage of his generosity; one of the younger sons frequently caused annoyance by his boyish pranks, and a son-in-law was chronically in need of financial assistance; here is one of his eloquent appeals:



“*Dear Sir;*—Upon my honour I have not language adequate to describe to you the pressing necessity I have for ten dollars; nor the remorse I feel at being under the painful obligation of again soliciting your parental aid.”

Chas. Simms, Gent., passed on to a future life in 1819, leaving a large family and a world the happier for his sojourn.



## INDEX.

|                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Appendix; "A." Letters—George Washington to Gov. Benjamin Harrison, and Reply .....                                                                                                        | 154 |
| George Washington to Maj. Gen. Knox .....                                                                                                                                                  | 162 |
| M. I. Stone to George Washington .....                                                                                                                                                     | 163 |
| Jas. Madison, Jr., to Thos. Jefferson .....                                                                                                                                                | 163 |
| George Washington to G. W. Fairfax .....                                                                                                                                                   | 164 |
| George Washington to Wm. Grayson .....                                                                                                                                                     | 164 |
| George Washington to Henry Lee .....                                                                                                                                                       | 165 |
| Thos. Jefferson to George Washington .....                                                                                                                                                 | 166 |
| George Washington to Thos. Jefferson .....                                                                                                                                                 | 166 |
| Extract from Will of George Washington .....                                                                                                                                               | 168 |
| Appendix; "B." Appeal to the Stockholders of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                   | 169 |
| Appendix; "C." Report to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States .....                                                                                                          | 172 |
| Appendix; "D." Statement of the Patowmack Company in response to call from Legislature of Maryland .....                                                                                   | 178 |
| Appendix; "E." Extracts Referring to the Work of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                               | 188 |
| From Duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, "Travels."                                                                                                                                         |     |
| From Isaac Weld, Jr., "Travels."                                                                                                                                                           |     |
| From John Phillips, "General History of Inland Navigation."                                                                                                                                |     |
| From Rev. Sam'l C. Busey, "Pictures of old Washington."                                                                                                                                    |     |
| From National Intelligencer, Baltimore Sun, George Town Museum, Baltimore Advertiser.                                                                                                      |     |
| From Hugh Taggart, "Old Georgetown."                                                                                                                                                       |     |
| Appendix; "F." Report of Thos. Moore, Engineer of Virginia ..                                                                                                                              | 197 |
| Report of Board of Public Works of Virginia.                                                                                                                                               |     |
| Appendix; "G." Acts of the Legislatures of Maryland and Virginia Concerning the Patowmack Company .....                                                                                    | 210 |
| Assent of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                      | 232 |
| Assent to Amendments .....                                                                                                                                                                 | 233 |
| Conveyance to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company .....                                                                                                                                  | 233 |
| Ballendine, John, of Fairfax County, Va. ....                                                                                                                                              | 24  |
| Scheme for opening navigation of the Potomac River—Goes to London—Circulates his "Proposals"—Returns in 1774—Advertises meetings, etc.—Subscription list—Rights protected in Virginia Act. |     |
| Beall, Thos. of George, Director in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                | 87  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Beall, Thos. of Sam'l., Secures contract for work on river.....                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 92  |
| Extension of contract, settlement .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 93  |
| Braddock Road, Appropriation by Virginia for improvement .....                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 12  |
| Brindley, Jas., Visits Mount Vernon .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 76  |
| Brewer, Jos., Appointed Treasurer of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 112 |
| Carleton, Jos., Appointed Treasurer of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 100 |
| Death .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 112 |
| Carroll, Dan'l of Duddington, Makes loan to Patowmack Company .                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 97  |
| Director in Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 171 |
| Casanove, Louis, Agent for Amsterdam Stockholders .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 62  |
| Casts votes against re-imbursement .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 100 |
| Clapham, Josias, Given order for two boats .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 62  |
| Delayed by illness .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 71  |
| Director in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 153 |
| Cresap, Thomas .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 3   |
| Biography (note)—Settles on Upper Potomac—Hunts over the mountains, with Geo. Croghan—Land grant in Pennsylvania (note)—Hatred of Pennsylvanians—Visits Williamsburg—Manager of Ohio Company in the field—Authorized to open road over the mountains—Blazes Nemaquin Path. |     |
| Makes Survey of western boundary of Maryland .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 13  |
| In London, 1770 .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 22  |
| Visited by Washington .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 23  |
| Croghan, Geo., Agent of Philadelphia merchants .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 7   |
| Land investments .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 239 |
| Cutler, Rev. Manasseh, Visits Great Falls .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 103 |
| Davis, John, Description of Great Falls of the Potomac (note) ...                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 101 |
| Deakins, Francis, Director in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 153 |
| Deakins, Wm., Jr., Director in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 87  |
| Dinwiddie, Gov., Member of the Ohio Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 9   |
| Sends Washington to French camp .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 15  |
| Dorsey, H., Director in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 153 |
| Dunmore, Fort, In possession of Virginia authorities .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 238 |
| Erratum, For "Old City Hotel," read "Wise's Tavern" .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 61  |
| Fairfax, Bryan, Befriends an apprentice lad .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 261 |
| Fairfax, George William, At Belvoir—Goes to western lands .....                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 13  |
| Fairfax, Lord, Meets Washington at Belvoir, Appoints him surveyor                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 14  |
| In Prince William County .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 20  |
| Fitzgerald, John, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 58  |
| President of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 87  |
| Fendall, Philip, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 93  |
| Forbes, Gen., Selects Pennsylvania Route .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 16  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                            |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Fort Stanwix Treaty .....                                                                                                                                                                  | 22       |
| Frederick Town Adventurers .....                                                                                                                                                           | 17       |
| Frederick Town Adventurers, Managers .....                                                                                                                                                 | 21       |
| French Invasion .....                                                                                                                                                                      | 15       |
| Foxhall, Henry, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                        | 124      |
| Gant and Fitzhugh, Attorneys for Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                   | 85       |
| Gilpin, George, Elected director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                | 58       |
| Directed to employ laborers .....                                                                                                                                                          | 62       |
| Value of services .....                                                                                                                                                                    | 76       |
| Gist, Christopher .....                                                                                                                                                                    | 10       |
| Engaged to select lands for Ohio Company grant—reports—<br>locates at Fort Red Stone—with Virginia Commissioners<br>makes treaty with Indians—lays off a town at Chartier's<br>Creek ..... | 11       |
| Greenleaf, Jas., Holds 24 shares in Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                | 104      |
| Hanbury & Co. of London, Held shares of Ohio Company stock—<br>goods for Indian trade ordered from .....                                                                                   | 10       |
| Hartshorne, Wm., Treasurer of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                      | 61       |
| Resigns .....                                                                                                                                                                              | 100      |
| Harvie, John, Indian Commissioner in West Augusta District .....                                                                                                                           | 239      |
| Letters to Chas. Simms .....                                                                                                                                                               | 252, 253 |
| Hughes, John, Letter to Chas. Simms .....                                                                                                                                                  | 262      |
| Hunter, Mr., Writes of visit to Mount Vernon—Potomac naviga-<br>tion, etc. ....                                                                                                            | 67       |
| Jefferson, Thos., Letter to George Washington, Potomac navigation .....                                                                                                                    | 37       |
| Johnson Bros., At Frederiek .....                                                                                                                                                          | 17       |
| Johnson, Thos., At Belvoir .....                                                                                                                                                           | 13       |
| Fails to secure navigation act in Maryland .....                                                                                                                                           | 24       |
| Promoter of Potomac navigation .....                                                                                                                                                       | 39       |
| Elected director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                | 58       |
| Qualifies as President of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                          | 84       |
| Jones, Walter, Attorney for Patowmack Company with Mr. Pinckney .....                                                                                                                      | 121      |
| Keith, Jas., and Chas. Simms, Serve as Credential Committee .....                                                                                                                          | 58       |
| Keith, Jas., Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                           | 87       |
| Keith, Jas., President of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                          | 102      |
| Laird, John, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                           | 124      |
| Lancaster, Treaty of .....                                                                                                                                                                 | 8        |
| Lear, Tobias, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                          | 88       |
| President of Patowmack Company .....                                                                                                                                                       | 93       |
| Store house at Matildaville used for depot .....                                                                                                                                           | 94       |
| Lee, Chas., Clerk of Patowmack Company organization .....                                                                                                                                  | 60       |

|                                                                                                                           |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Letter to Chas. Simms .....                                                                                               | 259      |
| Lee, Henry, Letters to Chas. Simms relative to his history .....                                                          | 264      |
| Lee, Thos., President of the Ohio Company .....                                                                           | 9        |
| Lee, Thos. Sim, Director of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                   | 58       |
| Lewis, Capt. Chas., (note) Describes Cresap's location on the Potomac ..                                                  | 6        |
| McCarty, Ed., Makes a loan to Patowmack Company .....                                                                     | 114      |
| McPherson, Isaac, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                     | 153      |
| Madison, Jas., Jr., Member of Virginia Legislature .....                                                                  | 41       |
| Letter to Thos. Jefferson .....                                                                                           | 53       |
| Marbury, Wm., Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                         | 118      |
| Marshall, John, Letter to Chas. Simms .....                                                                               | 254      |
| Maryland, Seeking easier communication with the west .....                                                                | 33       |
| Maryland and Virginia, diversity of commercial laws .....                                                                 | 41       |
| Mason, Thompson, Attorney for Patowmack Company .....                                                                     | 113      |
| Mason, George, Treasurer of the Ohio Company .....                                                                        | 9        |
| Calls for meetings of stockholders .....                                                                                  | 16       |
| Faith in Ohio Company rights.....                                                                                         | 93       |
| Mason, Gen. John, Director of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                 | 93       |
| Report to U. S. Treasurer .....                                                                                           | 107      |
| Elected President of the Patowmack Company .....                                                                          | 123      |
| Matildaville, Laid out .....                                                                                              | 87       |
| Mercer, George, In London .....                                                                                           | 22       |
| Mercer, John, Secretary of the Ohio Company .....                                                                         | 9        |
| Morris, Robert, Promoter of Canal schemes .....                                                                           | 21       |
| On inland waterways .....                                                                                                 | 76       |
| Montour, Half-Breed, Sells island to Simms & Co. ....                                                                     | 239      |
| Mount Vernon Compact, Accepted by Legislatures .....                                                                      | 51       |
| Myers, Christ., Recommended for superintendent of works .....                                                             | 90, 91   |
| Myers, Mrs. Jane, Keeper of public house at Matildaville ....                                                             | 101, 104 |
| Nemacolin Road, Development of .....                                                                                      | 15       |
| Popularity of .....                                                                                                       | 33       |
| Neville, Gen. John, In military command of West Augusta District ..                                                       | 239      |
| With Wood and Simms commissioned to raise a regiment ....                                                                 | 240      |
| New Market, Conference at .....                                                                                           | 119      |
| Ohio Company, Organized .....                                                                                             | 8        |
| Secures grant of land—Engages Gist to select land—Storehouse<br>built at Will's Creek—Goods ordered from Hanbury & Co. .. | 10       |
| Three store-houses built—Use river in transportation .....                                                                | 11       |
| Opposition of New York and Pennsylvania traders—French<br>plans .....                                                     | 12       |
| (Note) List of members—Popularity—Stores at Chartiers Creek<br>destroyed—Colonists' distrust of the Company .....         | 15       |
| Last calls for meetings—Political influence .....                                                                         | 169      |



|                                                                                                                             |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Refuse to confirm Geo. Mercer's agreement .....                                                                             | 22  |
| O'Neill, C., Director of Patowmack Company .....                                                                            | 144 |
| Patowmack Company, Bill sent Gov. Harrison and Thos. Johnson,<br>passed legislatures .....                                  | 44  |
| Mass meeting at Alexandria, Conference at Annapolis .....                                                                   | 45  |
| Report of conference .....                                                                                                  | 46  |
| Subscription books opened .....                                                                                             | 53  |
| Account of incorporation .....                                                                                              | 54  |
| Organization .....                                                                                                          | 56  |
| Popularity of the Company .....                                                                                             | 60  |
| Plan of work—List of stockholders .....                                                                                     | 59  |
| President and Board of Directors .....                                                                                      | 61  |
| Advertise for superintendent—Difficulties .....                                                                             | 62  |
| Employ Rumsey and Stewart—Directors examine river .....                                                                     | 63  |
| Meeting at Shenandoah, Instructions to Rumsey .....                                                                         | 64  |
| Johnson and Lee at Seneca and Shenandoah .....                                                                              | 70  |
| Quality of free labor .....                                                                                                 | 71  |
| First annual report of President and Directors .....                                                                        | 74  |
| Work delayed by excessive rains, petition for extension of time .....                                                       | 79  |
| Rumsey resigns, financial troubles .....                                                                                    | 80  |
| Second annual report .....                                                                                                  | 81  |
| Acts secured for speedy collection of assessments, Richardson<br>Stewart discharged, Jas. Smith appointed superintendent .. | 82  |
| Third annual report .....                                                                                                   | 83  |
| Thos. Johnson qualifies as president .....                                                                                  | 84  |
| Measures to be taken for speedy collections, work ordered on<br>river between Cumberland and Williamsport .....             | 84  |
| Condemnation of land at Great and Little Falls .....                                                                        | 85  |
| Work to commence on the Shenandoah, contract for locks .....                                                                | 85  |
| Annual report for 1792, Fitzgerald elected president .....                                                                  | 86  |
| Financial troubles .....                                                                                                    | 87  |
| Secure extension of time, 100 shares added to stock .....                                                                   | 88  |
| Weston requested to examine works .....                                                                                     | 89  |
| Delinquent shares sold, tolls to be collected, 100 new shares ...                                                           | 90  |
| Locks at Little Falls completed .....                                                                                       | 90  |
| Christ. Myers employed as superintendent .....                                                                              | 91  |
| Buildings at Great Falls, Thos. Beall's contract .....                                                                      | 92  |
| Lear elected president with Keith, Templeton, Fendall and<br>Mason, directors—Extension of time .....                       | 93  |
| Myers dismissed—Inclined plane at Great Falls—Harbaugh<br>engaged to build locks .....                                      | 94  |
| Exclusive rights on Shenandoah to be released—Thirty addi-<br>tional shares .....                                           | 95  |
| General meeting authorizes borrowing stock—Report of President ..                                                           | 95  |
| Machine for hauling merchandise at Great Falls .....                                                                        | 98  |

|                                                                                                                     |               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Appeal of directors (Appendix B)—Relief from Maryland legislature .....                                             | 99            |
| Hartshorne resigns, Carleton appointed, work pushed .....                                                           | 100           |
| Dimensions of locks changed .....                                                                                   | 101           |
| Report for 1801—Keith and board re-elected .....                                                                    | 102           |
| Locks opened at Great Falls—Visited by British Minister and Manasseh Cutler .....                                   | 103           |
| New undertakings—Chas. Simms becomes director .....                                                                 | 104           |
| Virginia Commissioners view works on river—Premiums offered for good boats .....                                    | 105           |
| Work on Shenandoah—Out of funds .....                                                                               | 106           |
| Report to U. S. Treasurer (Appendix C)—Simms elected president .....                                                | 107           |
| Resort to a lottery scheme .....                                                                                    | 108           |
| Secure extension of five years' time .....                                                                          | 110           |
| Fund raised for improvement of Antietam .....                                                                       | 111           |
| Death of Carleton—Appointment of Jos. Brewer—Stone locks ordered for Little Falls—Shenandoah people impatient ..... | 112           |
| Dispute over lottery ticket sale, secure loan from Maryland ..                                                      | 113           |
| Conference with Shenandoah people .....                                                                             | 115           |
| Appeal to Virginia legislature .....                                                                                | 116           |
| President Simms resigns .....                                                                                       | 117           |
| Elie Williams becomes president, serious trouble with Shenandoah people .....                                       | 118           |
| Agreement reached with Shenandoah people .....                                                                      | 119           |
| Lottery suit dreaded .....                                                                                          | 121           |
| Loans secured from District banks—Land trouble at Little Falls                                                      | 122           |
| John Mason elected president, Brewer resigns, Jas. Moore, Jr., appointed treasurer .....                            | 123           |
| Report of 1819 .....                                                                                                | 124           |
| Appeal to Maryland legislature (Appendix D)—Engineer of Virginia to make examination of river and works .....       | 125           |
| Communication from Maryland legislature, reply .....                                                                | 126           |
| Report for 1821 .....                                                                                               | 130           |
| Report for 1822 .....                                                                                               | 132           |
| End of records—Report for 1823 .....                                                                                | 135           |
| Report of 1824 .....                                                                                                | 137           |
| Agitation for a new company .....                                                                                   | 139           |
| Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Co. incorporated by Virginia .....                                                        | 140           |
| Assent of Patowmack Company—Report of 1825 .....                                                                    | 141           |
| Trouble with Union bank .....                                                                                       | 143, 145, 150 |
| Report of 1826 .....                                                                                                | 144           |
| Report of 1827 .....                                                                                                | 147           |
| Report of 1828 .....                                                                                                | 149           |
| Conveyance made .....                                                                                               | 151           |
| Works at Great Falls abandoned .....                                                                                | 152           |

|                                                                                                  |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Washington's association with the place .....                                                    | 152 |
| Officers of .....                                                                                | 153 |
| Peter, George, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                               | 153 |
| Peter, Robert, Director of Patowmack Company .....                                               | 118 |
| Potomac River, Inspection of, by Gov. Sharpe of Maryland .....                                   | 15  |
| Use of, by the Ohio Company .....                                                                | 12  |
| Improvement of, by Frederick Town Company .....                                                  | 17  |
| Improvement of, by John Ballendine .....                                                         | 24  |
| Potts, John, Jr., Clerk of Board of Directors .....                                              | 61  |
| Goes to Philadelphia .....                                                                       | 82  |
| Builds forge at Matildaville .....                                                               | 87  |
| Randolph, Edmund, Letter to Simms, appointed Attorney General ..                                 | 258 |
| Ross, Alex, Makes sales of land to Simms .....                                                   | 239 |
| Rumsey, James, Exhibits boat to Gen. Washington .....                                            | 43  |
| Employed by Patowmack Company .....                                                              | 63  |
| Advertises run-a-way servants .....                                                              | 72  |
| Letter to Hartshorne .....                                                                       | 73  |
| Resigns, files charges against Stewart .....                                                     | 79  |
| Sayre, Stephen, Proposes tontine .....                                                           | 41  |
| Scott, Gustavus, Buys stock, of Patowmack Company .....                                          | 90  |
| Scots-Irish Presbyterians .....                                                                  | 13  |
| Shepherd, Abraham, Given order for two boats .....                                               | 62  |
| Simms, Charles, Becomes director of Patowmack Company .....                                      | 104 |
| Becomes president of Patowmack Company .....                                                     | 107 |
| Leaves Patowmack Company .....                                                                   | 117 |
| A law student .....                                                                              | 237 |
| At Point Pleasant battle—At Pittsburgh .....                                                     | 238 |
| Friends on the frontier—Land speculations .....                                                  | 239 |
| Delegate from West Augusta—Receives major's commission...                                        | 239 |
| Commissioner of Virginia, in Morristown society .....                                            | 240 |
| Letters to Miss Douglass .....                                                                   | 241 |
| Advertises land in the west .....                                                                | 244 |
| Antipathy of Pennsylvania courts to Virginia land titles .....                                   | 244 |
| Asks leave of absence .....                                                                      | 245 |
| Gen. Washington's reply .....                                                                    | 246 |
| Second request for leave .....                                                                   | 247 |
| Letter from Congress to Virginia Assembly .....                                                  | 248 |
| Resigns Commission .....                                                                         | 249 |
| Memorial to Virginia legislature and reply .....                                                 | 250 |
| In the west, suit on Ross' notes .....                                                           | 250 |
| Journey to Philadelphia—Douglass warrant located on Montour<br>Island—Title again assailed ..... | 251 |
| Locates in Alexandria .....                                                                      | 251 |
| Delegate to Virginia Assembly .....                                                              | 255 |

|                                                                |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Activities in Alexandria .....                                 | 256      |
| At funeral of Washington .....                                 | 259      |
| Connection with Patowmack Company .....                        | 260      |
| Family—Politics .....                                          | 261      |
| Friendship of Henry Lee .....                                  | 264      |
| Collector of customs—Mayor—Account of British invasion ...     | 265      |
| Death .....                                                    | 267      |
| Simms, Mrs. Chas., Letters .....                               | 255, 257 |
| Simms and Keith, Appointed credential committee .....          | 58       |
| Smith, Clement, Director of Patowmack Company .....            | 151      |
| Stewart, Richardson, Employed by Patowmack Company .....       | 63       |
| Dismissed .....                                                | 82       |
| Stratton, J., Letter to Simms .....                            | 263      |
| Stuart, David, Director of Patowmack Company .....             | 85       |
| Swann, Thos., Letter to Simms .....                            | 260      |
| Templeman, John, Director of Patowmack Company .....           | 88       |
| Thompson, Jonah, Director of Patowmack Company .....           | 118      |
| To negotiate with Shenandoah Company .....                     | 120      |
| Thompson, Josiah, Special Lottery agent .....                  | 110      |
| Superintendent of work on river .....                          | 117      |
| Thompson, Tobias, In charge of works .....                     | 110      |
| Vandalia Company, Failure of .....                             | 22       |
| Virginia, Military warrants .....                              | 22       |
| Vowell, John C., Director of Patowmack Company .....           | 118      |
| Washington, Augustine and Lawrence, Members of Ohio Company .. | 9        |
| Washington, George, At Belvoir .....                           | 13       |
| Guest of Cresap—Appointed Surveyor—Military appointment .      | 14       |
| Envoy to treat with French commandant .....                    | 15       |
| Agent of Virginia soldiers—Inspects lands on the Ohio .....    | 23       |
| Procures act for opening Potomac navigation .....              | 23       |
| Opinion of value of western trade .....                        | 33       |
| Conferences at Annapolis .....                                 | 35       |
| Conference at Mount Vernon .....                               | 37       |
| Policy of Maryland and Virginia .....                          | 39       |
| Sets out on western journey of inspection .....                | 42       |
| Meets Rumsey at Bath—Sees model of boat .....                  | 43       |
| At Richmond with Lafayette .....                               | 45       |
| Virginia votes him shares of Potomac and James River stock ..  | 56       |
| Elected president of the Patowmack Company .....               | 58       |
| At Frederick .....                                             | 63       |
| Enthusiasm—Opinion on advisability of opening Mississippi      |          |
| River .....                                                    | 66       |
| Attends Convention at Philadelphia .....                       | 80       |

|                                                           |        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Makes loan to Patowmack Company .....                     | 97     |
| At general meeting of Patowmack Company .....             | 98     |
| Signs subscription for relief—Votes by proxy .....        | 99     |
| Arsenal for Harpers Ferry secured by .....                | 104    |
| Letters from,                                             |        |
| to Bouquet, 16; to Thos. Johnson, 18, 44; to Dr. Boucher, |        |
| 23; to Lafayette, 34, 36, 66; to Chastellux, 34; to Maj.  |        |
| Gen. Knox, 36; to Thos. Jefferson, 38; to Jas. Madison,   |        |
| 49; to R. H. Lee, 52, 67; to Thos. Johnson and Thos. Sim. |        |
| Lee, 60; to Humphreys, 66; to Edmund Randolph, 67, 68;    |        |
| to Gilpin and Fitzgerald, 77; to Tobias Lear, 88, 89, 90. |        |
| See also Appendix “A” .....                               | 154    |
| Western Settlements, Encouraged by Virginia .....         | 11, 12 |
| Williams, Elie, President of the Patowmack Company .....  | 117    |
| Wood, James, In West Augusta District .....               | 239    |
| Commissioner of Virginia .....                            | 240    |
| Young, Notley, Director of the Patowmack Co. ....         | 84     |

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